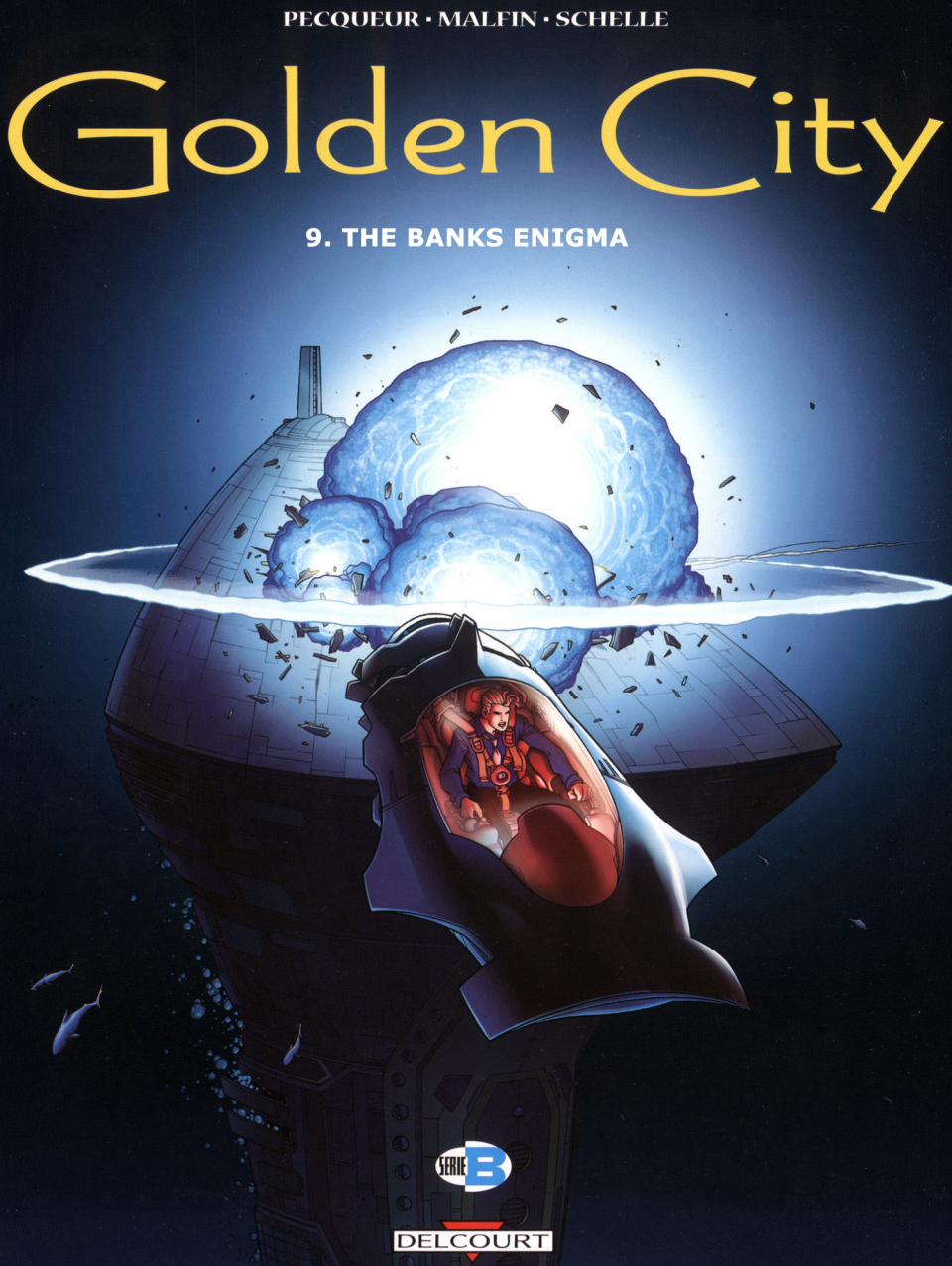
PECQUEUR · MALFIN · SCHELLE

# Golden City

## 9. THE BANKS ENIGMA



SERIE B

DELCOURT

7

# Golden City

## 9. THE BANKS ENIGMA

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*Merci à l'équipe Delcourt et à l'équipe Delsol.*
*D. P.*

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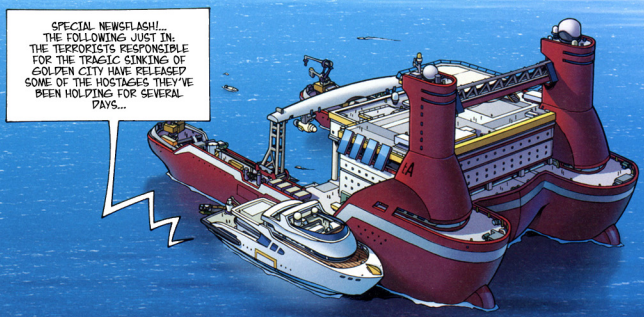
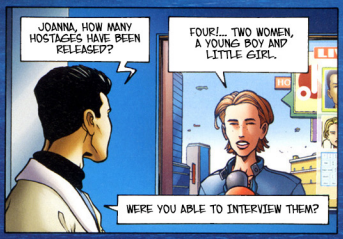

SPECIAL NEWSFLASH!... THE FOLLOWING JUST IN: THE TERRORISTS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TRAGIC SINKING OF GOLDEN CITY HAVE RELEASED SOME OF THE HOSTAGES THEY'VE BEEN HOLDING FOR SEVERAL DAYS...

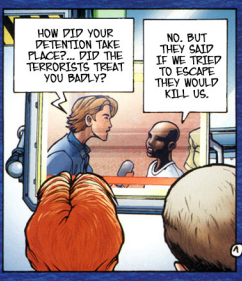
...WE'RE IMMEDIATELY JOINING OUR CORRESPONDENT ON SITE, JOANNA SHIMKUS.

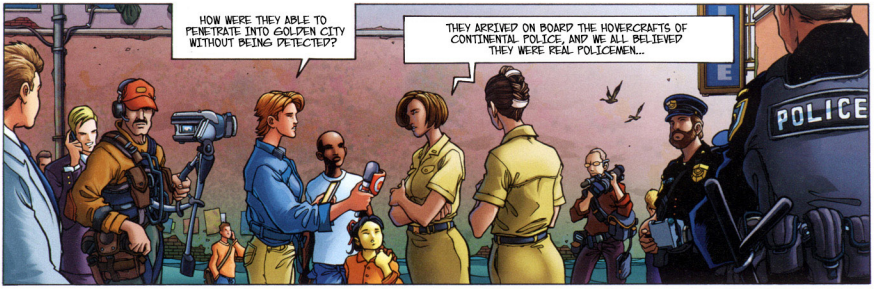

JOANNA, HOW MANY HOSTAGES HAVE BEEN RELEASED?
FOUR!... TWO WOMEN, A YOUNG BOY AND LITTLE GIRL.
WERE YOU ABLE TO INTERVIEW THEM?

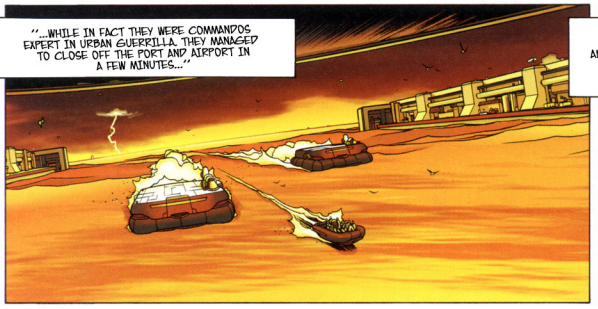
NOT YET. BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, THEY'RE EMERGING FROM THE POLICE STATION WHERE THEY WERE INTERROGATED AND I'LL TRY TO ASK THEM A FEW QUESTIONS.
POLICE HEADQUATERS

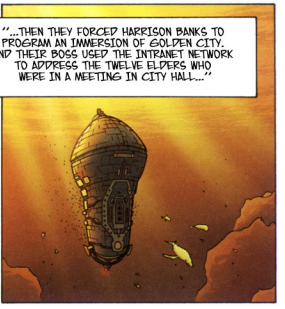
THEY'RE ALIVE!... WHAAAOUOUOU!
?!

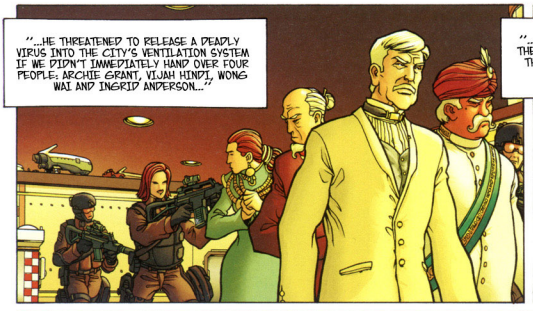
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
SOLO.
AND I'M KUMIKO.
DO YOU KNOW THEM?
YES. THAT'S MY NIECE AND MY BEST FRIEND.

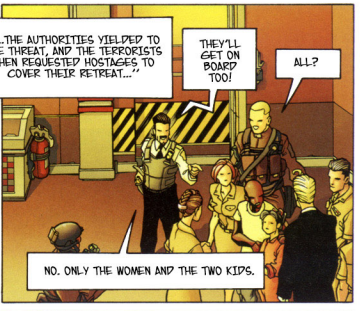

HOW DID YOUR DETENTION TAKE PLACE?... DID THE TERRORISTS TREAT YOU BADLY?
NO. BUT THEY SAID IF WE TRIED TO ESCAPE THEY WOULD KILL US.


HOW WERE THEY ABLE TO PENETRATE INTO GOLDEN CITY WITHOUT BEING DETECTED?
THEY ARRIVED ON BOARD THE HOVERCRAFTS OF CONTINENTAL POLICE, AND WE ALL BELIEVED THEY WERE REAL POLICEMEN...
POLICE

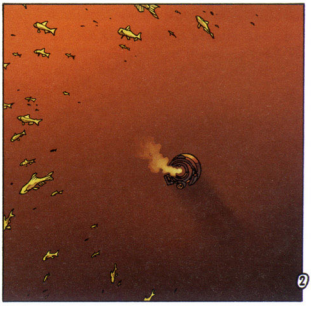

"...WHILE IN FACT THEY WERE COMMANDOS EXPERT IN URBAN GUERRILLA. THEY MANAGED TO CLOSE OFF THE PORT AND AIRPORT IN A FEW MINUTES..."


"...THEN THEY FORCED HARRISON BANKS TO PROGRAM AN IMMERSION OF GOLDEN CITY. AND THEIR BOSS USED THE INTRANET NETWORK TO ADDRESS THE TWELVE ELDERS WHO WERE IN A MEETING IN CITY HALL..."

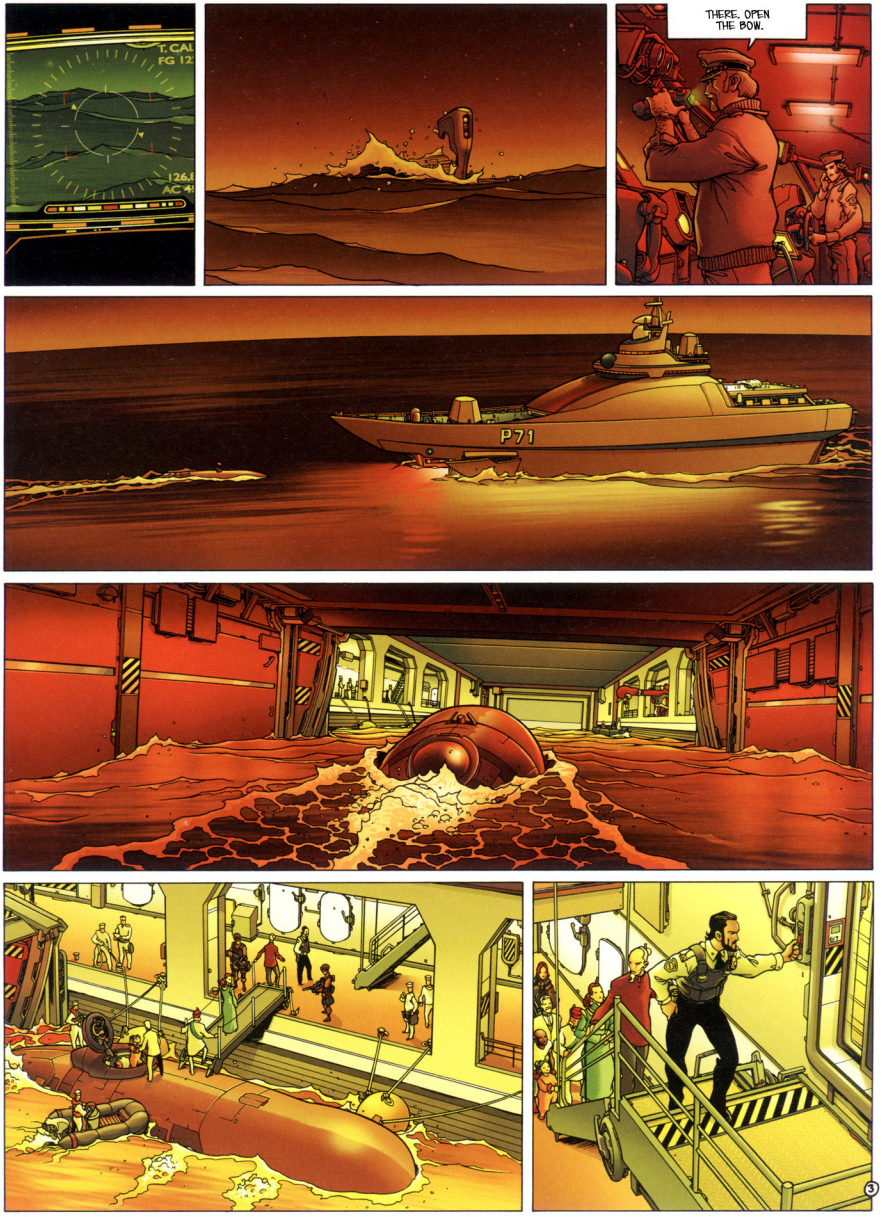

"...HE THREATENED TO RELEASE A DEADLY VIRUS INTO THE CITY'S VENTILATION SYSTEM IF WE DIDN'T IMMEDIATELY HAND OVER FOUR PEOPLE: ARCHIE GRANT, VIJAH HINDI, WONG WAI AND INGRID ANDERSON..."

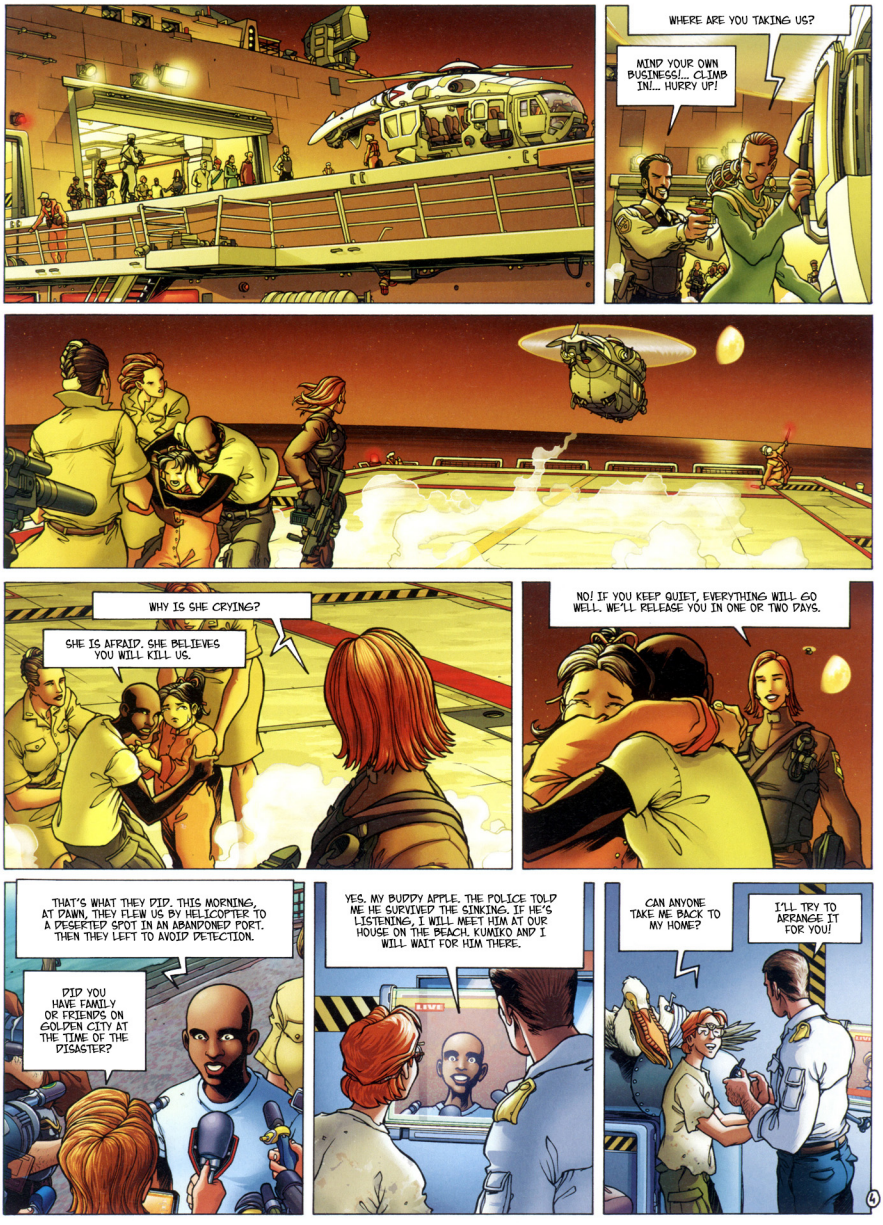

"...THE AUTHORITIES YIELDED TO THE THREAT, AND THE TERRORISTS THEN REQUESTED HOSTAGES TO COVER THEIR RETREAT..."
THEY'LL GET ON BOARD TOO!
ALL?
NO. ONLY THE WOMEN AND THE TWO KIDS.

"...HARRISON BANKS TRIED TO STOP THEM, BUT THEY KNOCKED HIM OUT WITH THE BUTT OF A REVOLVER BEFORE ESCAPING ABOARD A SUBMARINE*."



*SEE VOLUME 7 AND 8


T. CAL
FG 12
126,
AC 4
THERE. OPEN THE BOW.
P71


WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!... CLIMB IN... HURRY UP!
WHY IS SHE CRYING?
SHE IS AFRAID. SHE BELIEVES YOU WILL KILL US.
NO! IF YOU KEEP QUIET, EVERYTHING WILL GO WELL. WE'LL RELEASE YOU IN ONE OR TWO DAYS.
THAT'S WHAT THEY DID. THIS MORNING, AT DAWN, THEY FLEW US BY HELICOPTER TO A DESERTED SPOT IN AN ABANDONED PORT. THEN THEY LEFT TO AVOID DETECTION.
DID YOU HAVE FAMILY OR FRIENDS ON GOLDEN CITY AT THE TIME OF THE DISASTER?
YES. MY BUDDY APPLE. THE POLICE TOLD ME HE SURVIVED THE SINKING. IF HE'S LISTENING, I WILL MEET HIM AT OUR HOUSE ON THE BEACH. KUMIKO AND I WILL WAIT FOR HIM THERE.
CAN ANYONE TAKE ME BACK TO MY HOME?
I'LL TRY TO ARRANGE IT FOR YOU!

COMMANDER. TEAM ABUSSOS 2 HAS A PROBLEM!
COMING.
WHAT'S HAPPENING, RON?
WE WERE TRYING TO REACH THE PORT...
...BUT WE'RE BLOCKED: THE CORRIDOR IS ON FIRE. WE'RE UNABLE TO CONTINUE THIS WAY. YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER ROUTE!
ACCORDING TO WHAT I SEE ON THE CITY PLANS, THERE IS ONLY ONE SOLUTION: BYPASS THE FIRE BY GOING THROUGH THE PIPELINE NETWORK. IT'S ACCESSED THROUGH WATERTIGHT DOOR 314.
IT'S LOCATED IN THE HALLWAY YOU'RE IN NOW. IT ALLOWS TECHNICAL TEAMS TO MAKE REPAIRS. DO YOU SEE IT?
YES!... BUT IT NEEDS A CODE TO OPEN IT. FOR SAFETY REASONS NO DOUBT. DO YOU KNOW IT?
NO. BLOW IT UP.
314
5
OK!... SR4 IS GOING TO DO IT. IT'S HIS SPECIALITY.

TAKE COVER!... IT'S GOING TO BLOW!
THE EXPLOSIVE BLAST FANNED THE FLAMES!
LET'S GET OUT BEFORE IT SPREADS ACROSS THE CORRIDOR!
SHIT, THAT'S ALL WE NEED!
IT'S FLOODED, COMMANDER, BUT WE CAN STILL TRY.
OK!... KEEP IN PERMANENT CONTACT WITH ME. I'LL GUIDE YOU WITH HELP FROM THE PLANS.
JUMP!... QUICKLY!

WHERE DO I GO, COMMANDER?... TO THE LEFT OR TO THE RIGHT?
LEFT!
AND NOW, RON, HEAD UP TOWARD THE PORT.
OK!

IT'S TERRIFYING!... EVERYTHING IS DESTROYED!... WHAT HAPPENED IN THIS PLACE?
NO IDEA!... ACCORDING TO WHAT APPLE TOLD ME, THERE WAS A HUGE EXPLOSION BEFORE THE CITY WENT DARK*. THAT'S THE ONLY CLUE WE HAVE AT THE MOMENT.

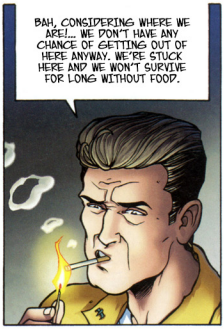


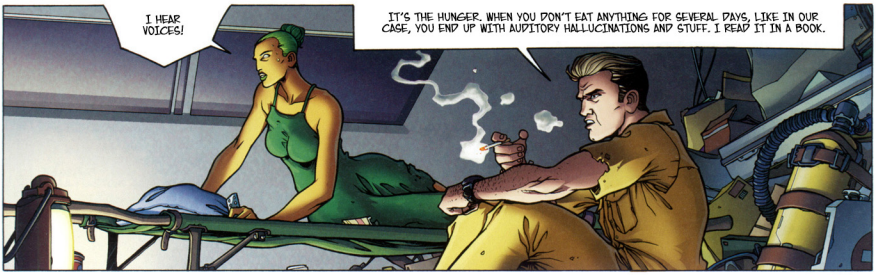
*SEE VOLUME 8.

HERE. TAKE TWO.
IT WILL EASE YOUR PAIN.

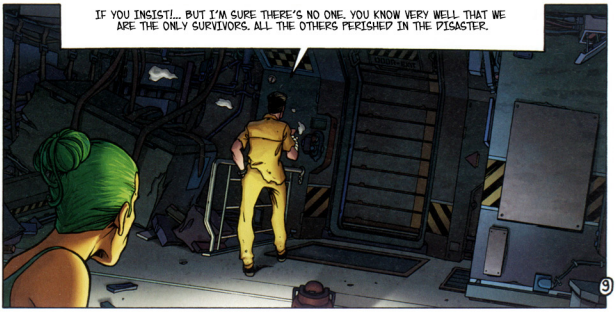
WHAT IS IT?
MORPHINE TABLETS. I FOUND THEM JUST NOW WHILE SEARCHING FOR FOOD IN THE AIRCRAFT WRECK.

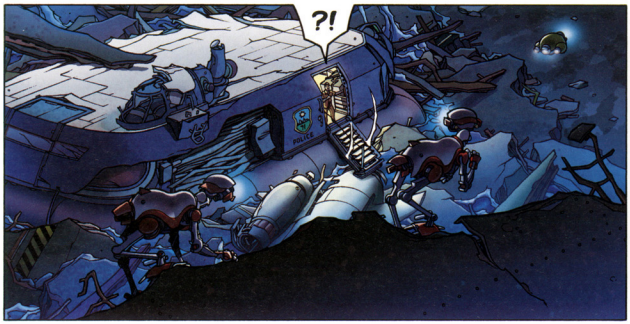
I ALSO DUG OUT A PACK OF CIGARETTES. THERE'S ONLY ONE LEFT. YOU WANT IT?
NO. SMOKING KILLS.


BAH, CONSIDERING WHERE WE ARE!... WE DON'T HAVE ANY CHANCE OF GETTING OUT OF HERE ANYWAY. WE'RE STUCK HERE AND WE WON'T SURVIVE FOR LONG WITHOUT FOOD.

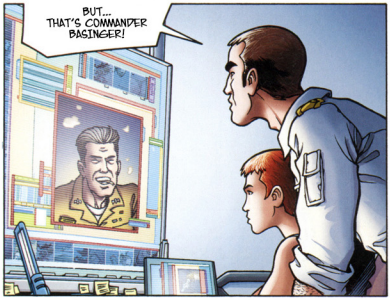

I HEAR VOICES!
IT'S THE HUNGER. WHEN YOU DON'T EAT ANYTHING FOR SEVERAL DAYS, LIKE IN OUR CASE, YOU END UP WITH AUDITORY HALLUCINATIONS AND STUFF. I READ IT IN A BOOK.

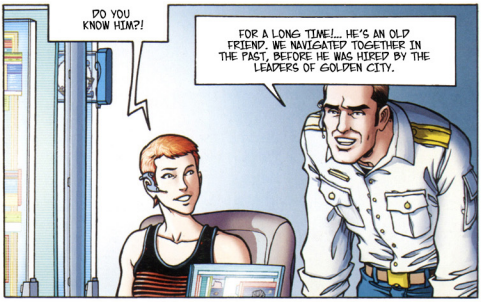
NO, HUNGER HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT!... I'M SURE I HEARD SOMEONE SPEAK OUTSIDE!... GO TAKE A LOOK!


IF YOU INSIST!... BUT I'M SURE THERE'S NO ONE. YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT WE ARE THE ONLY SURVIVORS. ALL THE OTHERS PERISHED IN THE DISASTER.


?!

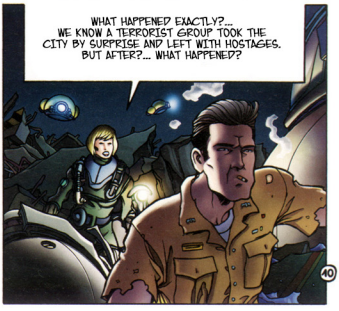
OVER HERE, RON!... COME!... THERE ARE SURVIVORS!

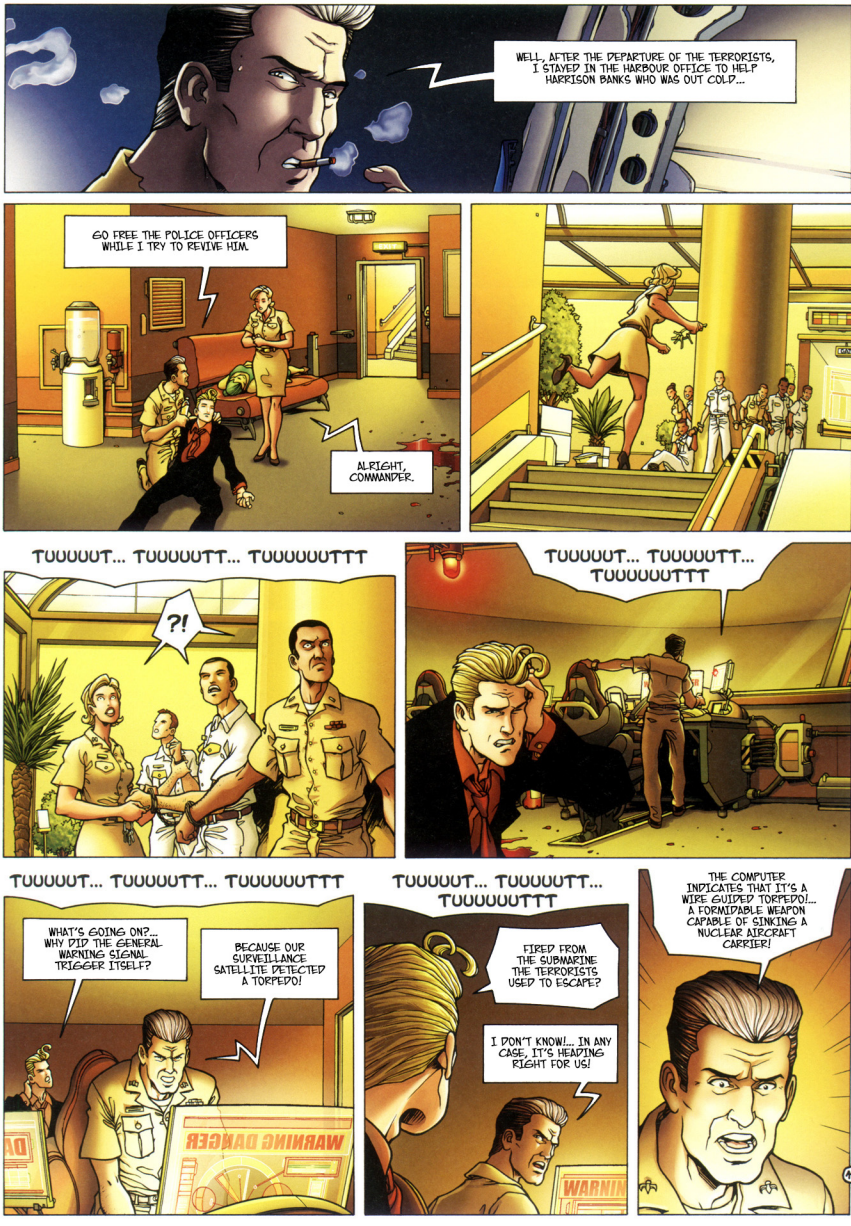

BUT... THAT'S COMMANDER BASINGER!


DO YOU KNOW HIM?!
FOR A LONG TIME!... HE'S AN OLD FRIEND. WE NAVIGATED TOGETHER IN THE PAST, BEFORE HE WAS HIRED BY THE LEADERS OF GOLDEN CITY.

ARE YOU THE ONLY PERSON IN THIS PART OF THE CITY WHO SURVIVED THE SINKING?
NO. THERE'S ALSO PROFESSOR SEED. BUT SHE'S HURT. SHE HAS A BROKEN LEG.

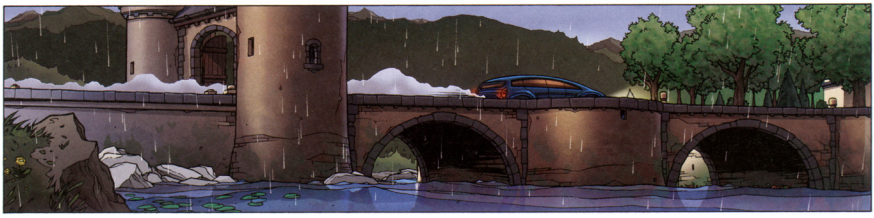
WHERE IS SHE?
POLICE
IN THE HOVERCRAFT!... I PUT HER IN A MAKESHIFT SPLINT AND SET HER UP INSIDE, TO SHELTER HER FROM THE WATER POURING FROM RIPPED PIPES CAUSED BY THE EXPLOSION.

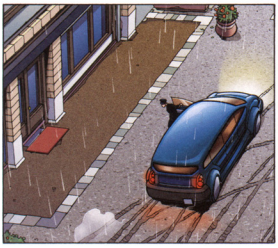

WHAT HAPPENED EXACTLY?... WE KNOW A TERRORIST GROUP TOOK THE CITY BY SURPRISE AND LEFT WITH HOSTAGES. BUT AFTER?... WHAT HAPPENED?

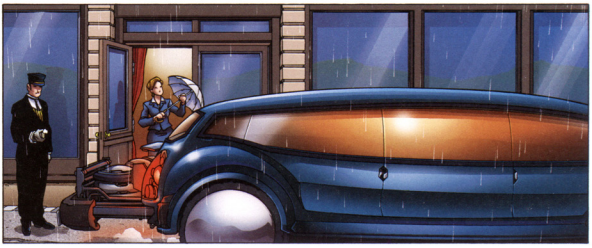

WELL, AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF THE TERRORISTS, I STAYED IN THE HARBOUR OFFICE TO HELP HARRISON BANKS WHO WAS OUT COLD...
GO FREE THE POLICE OFFICERS WHILE I TRY TO REVIVE HIM.
ALRIGHT, COMMANDER.
TUUUUUT... TUUUUUTT... TUUUUUUTTT
?!
TUUUUUT... TUUUUUTT... TUUUUUUTTT
TUUUUUT... TUUUUUTT... TUUUUUUTTT
WHAT'S GOING ON?... WHY DID THE GENERAL WARNING SIGNAL TRIGGER ITSELF?
BECAUSE OUR SURVEILLANCE SATELLITE DETECTED A TORPEDO!
WARNING DANGER
TUUUUUT... TUUUUUTT... TUUUUUUTTT
FIRED FROM THE SUBMARINE THE TERRORISTS USED TO ESCAPE?
I DON'T KNOW!... IN ANY CASE, IT'S HEADING RIGHT FOR US!
WARNIN
THE COMPUTER INDICATES THAT IT'S A WIRE GUIDED TORPEDO!... A FORMIDABLE WEAPON CAPABLE OF SINKING A NUCLEAR AIRCRAFT CARRIER!
11

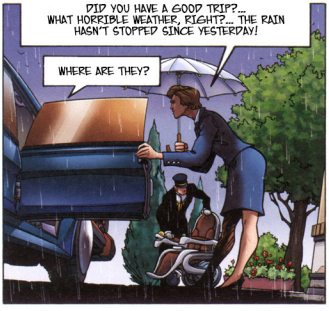
I'LL TRY TO INTERCEPT IT BEFORE IT HITS!
THAT'S CRAZY!... EVEN IF YOU MANAGE TO DESTROY IT, YOU HAVE NO CHANCE OF SURVIVAL! THE EXPLOSIVE BLAST WILL KILL YOU!
WARNING
MILITARY AREA
TRESPASSING
BEYOND THIS POINT
I KNOW, BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE THE PEOPLE OF GOLDEN CITY.
WARNING
OPEN THE AIRLOCK AND GO BACK TO THE HARBOUR OFFICE. I MAY NEED YOU TO GUIDE ME.
OK!
HELLO, COMMANDER?... I SEE IT!... I'LL CLOSE IN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE BEFORE FIRING. I DON'T WANT TO MISS IT.

?!
IT WAS ONLY A DECOY!... WE WERE TRICKED!
THE SATELLITE HAS JUST SPOTTED ANOTHER TORPEDO!... IT'S COMING FROM THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION!... IMPACT IN THIRTY SECONDS!
A.13

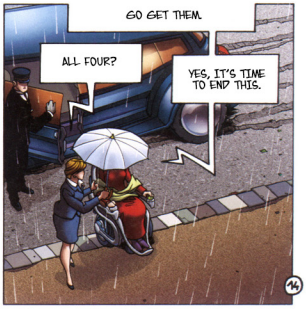


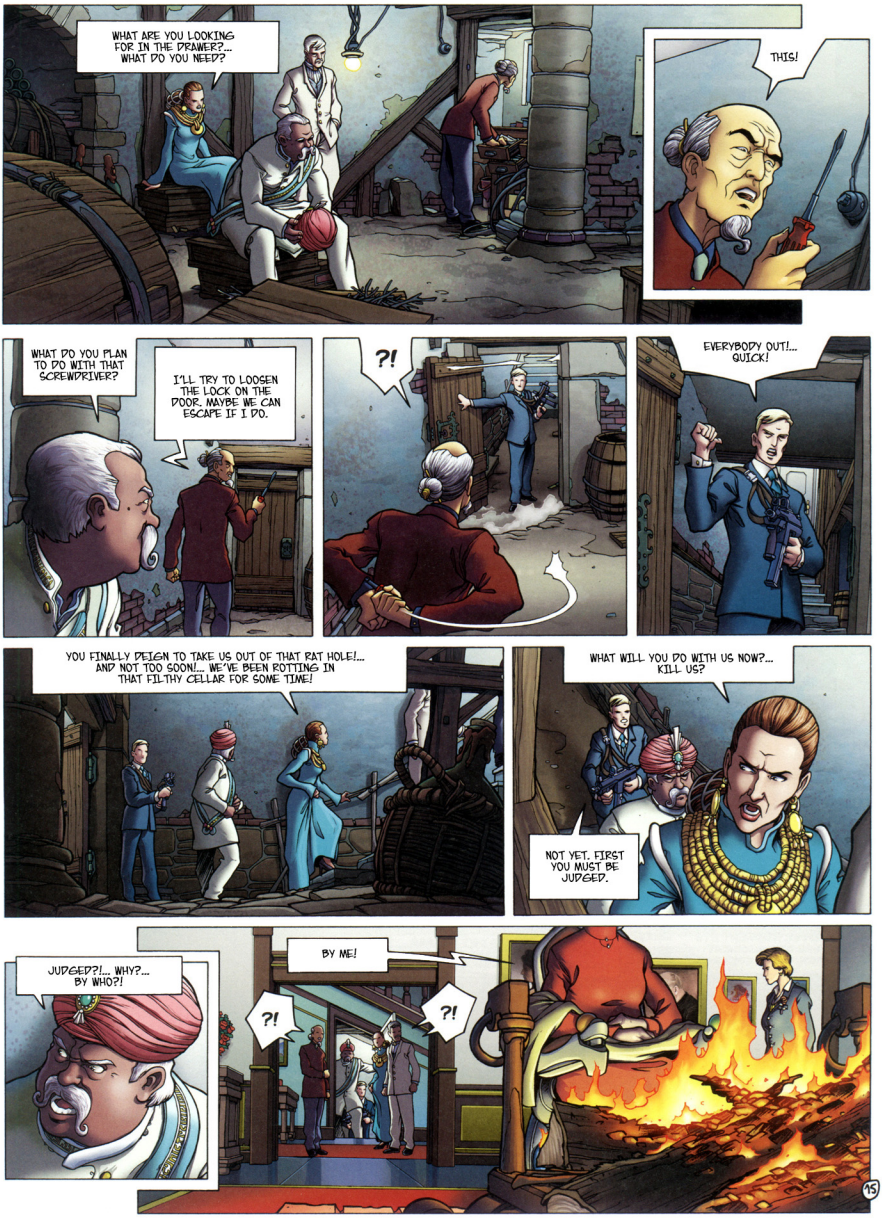




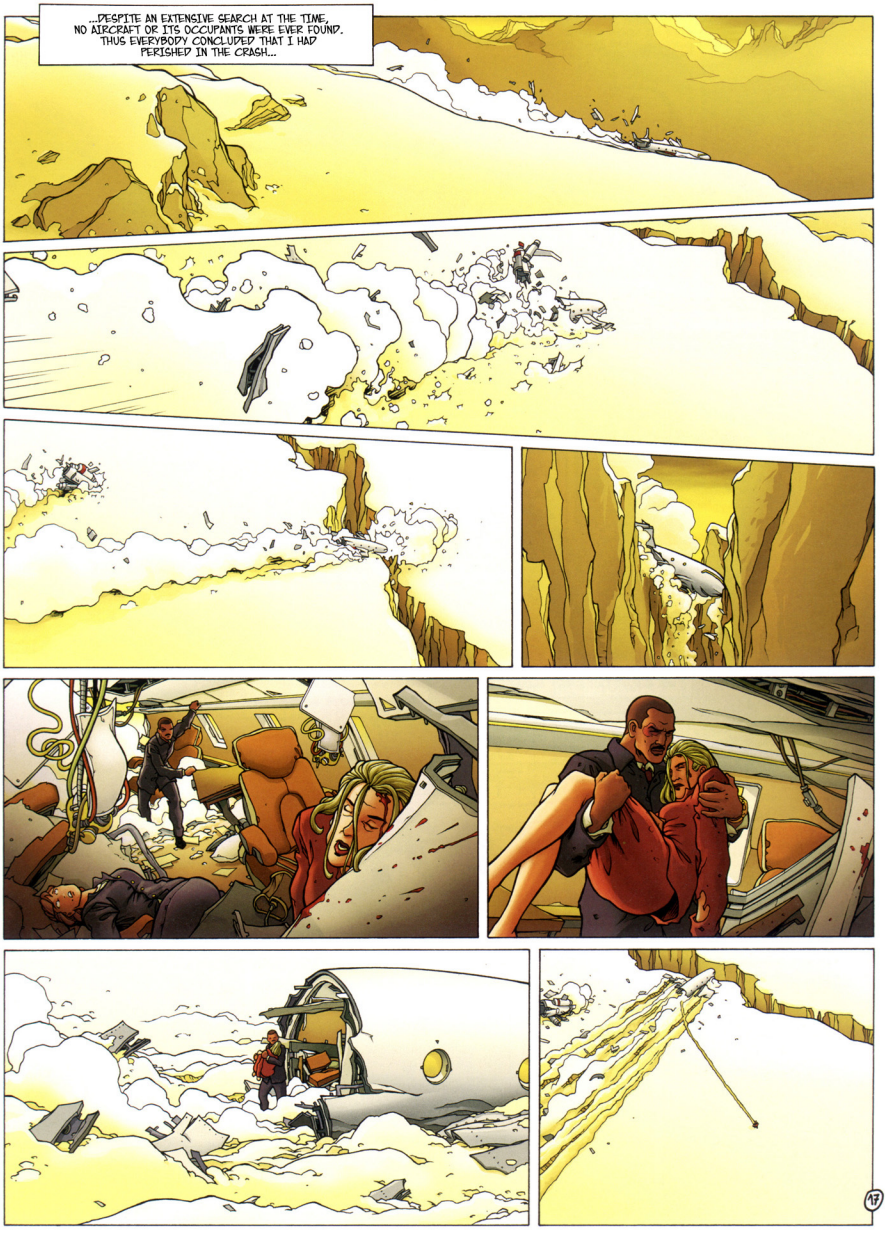

DID YOU HAVE A GOOD TRIP?... WHAT HORRIBLE WEATHER, RIGHT?... THE RAIN HASN'T STOPPED SINCE YESTERDAY!
WHERE ARE THEY?

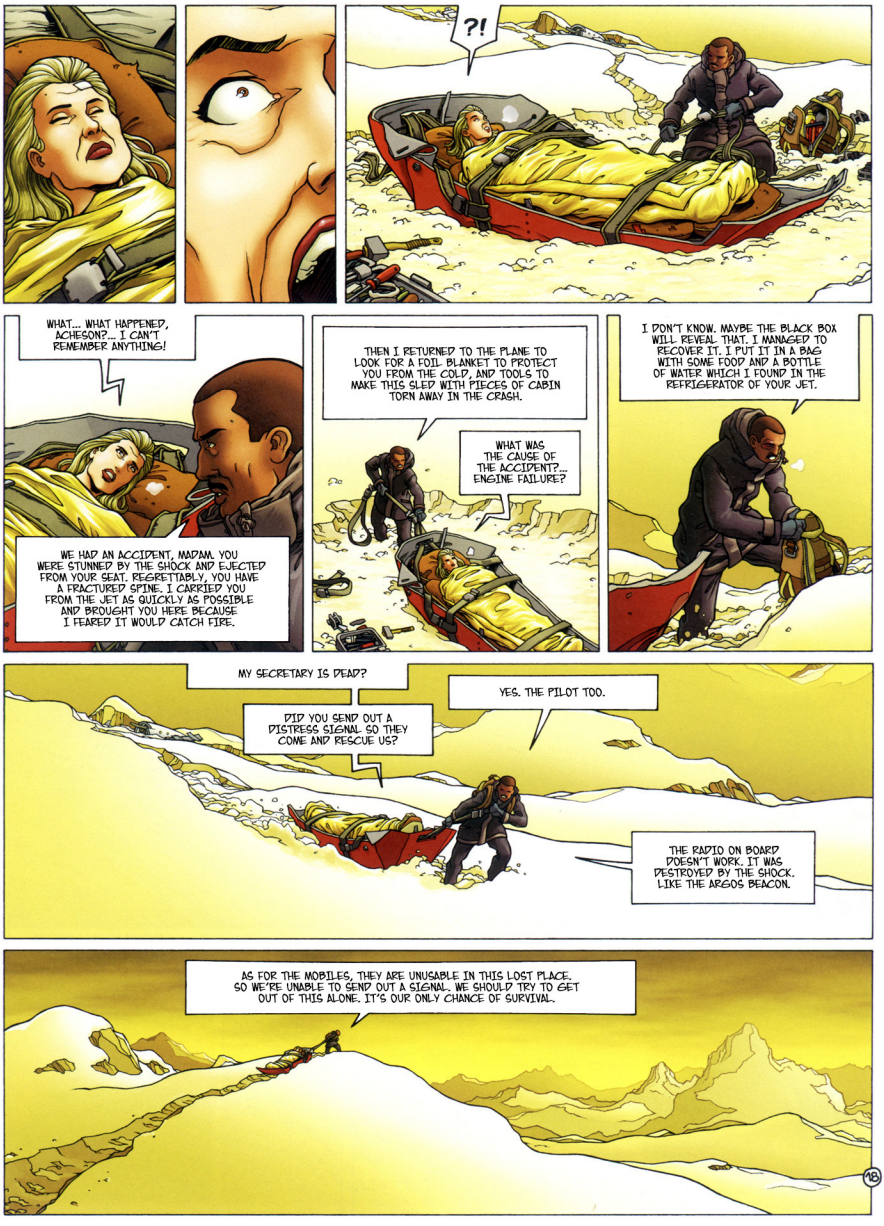
IN THE BASEMENT. WE LOCKED THEM IN THE CELLAR SO THEY CAN'T ESCAPE.


GO GET THEM.
ALL FOUR?
YES, IT'S TIME TO END THIS.

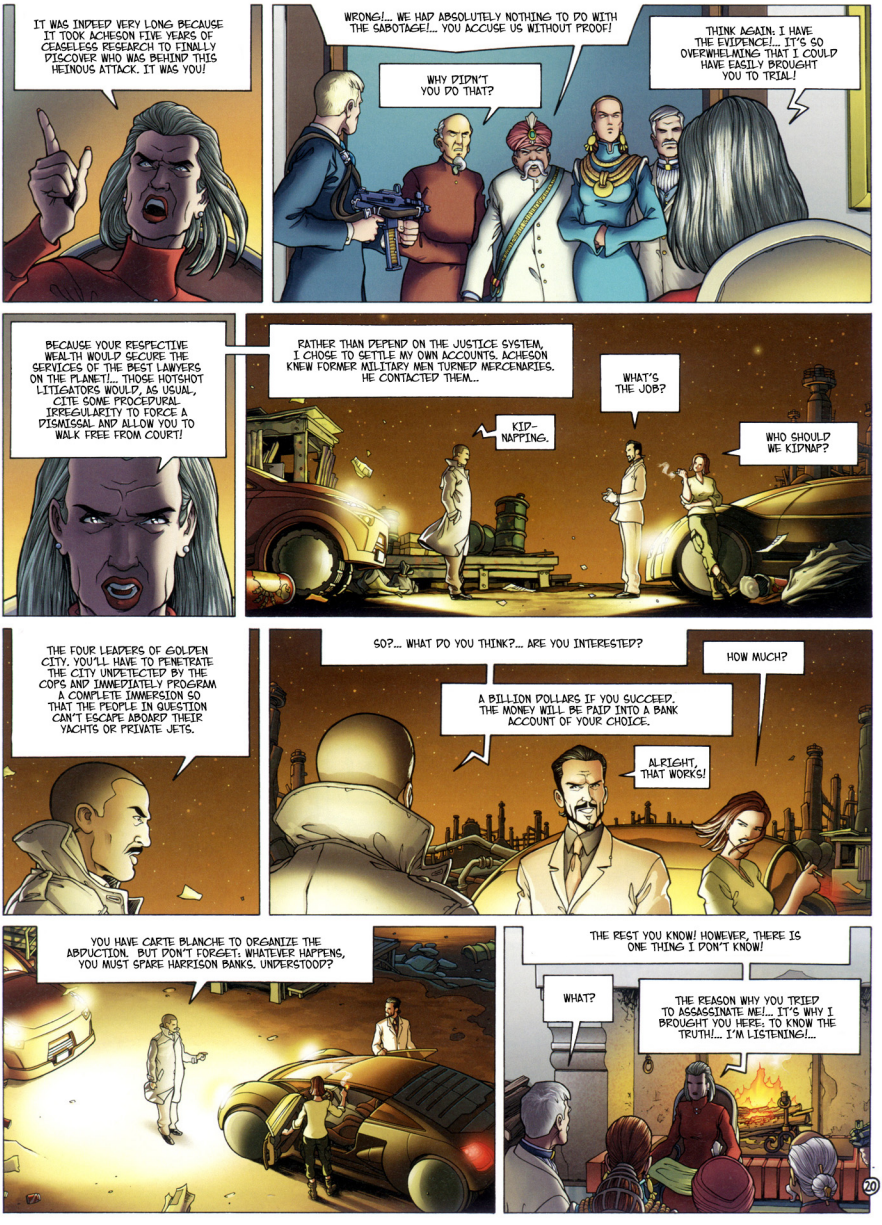

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN THE DRAWER?... WHAT DO YOU NEED?
THIS!
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH THAT SCREWDRIVER?
I'LL TRY TO LOOSEN THE LOCK ON THE DOOR. MAYBE WE CAN ESCAPE IF I DO.
?!
EVERYBODY OUT!... QUICK!
YOU FINALLY DEIGN TO TAKE US OUT OF THAT RAT HOLE!... AND NOT TOO SOON!... WE'VE BEEN ROTTING IN THAT FILTHY CELLAR FOR SOME TIME!
WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH US NOW?... KILL US?
NOT YET. FIRST YOU MUST BE JUDGED.
JUDGED?!... WHY?... BY WHO?!
BY ME!
?!
?!

THIS CASTLE BELONGS TO ME. ONCE IT WAS MY SUMMER RESIDENCE. I LOVED SPENDING HOLIDAYS IN THIS ISOLATED PLACE, FAR FROM THE TURMOIL OF THE WORLD. BUT I HAVEN'T BEEN BACK SINCE MY DEATH.
YOUR... YOUR DEATH?!... WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?... WHO ARE YOU?
DO YOU BELIEVE IN GHOSTS, MISS ANDERSON?
OF COURSE NOT!
YOU'RE WRONG BECAUSE THEY DO EXIST...
HERE IS THE PROOF!
?!
IRINA BANKS!!
SURPRISED TO SEE ME AGAIN, ARE YOU?... YOU WEREN'T EXPECTING THAT!
WHAT'S WITH THE SINISTER MASQUERADE?... YOU CAN'T BE IRINA BANKS. SHE DIED FIVE YEARS AGO IN A PLANE CRASH!
EXACTLY, MISS ANDERSON... I WAS INDEED A VICTIM OF A PLANE CRASH FIVE YEARS AGO...
...FOR UNKNOWN REASON, MY PRIVATE JET CRASHED SOMEWHERE IN THE ANDES MOUNTAIN RANGE...


...DESPITE AN EXTENSIVE SEARCH AT THE TIME, NO AIRCRAFT OR ITS OCCUPANTS WERE EVER FOUND. THUS EVERYBODY CONCLUDED THAT I HAD PERISHED IN THE CRASH...

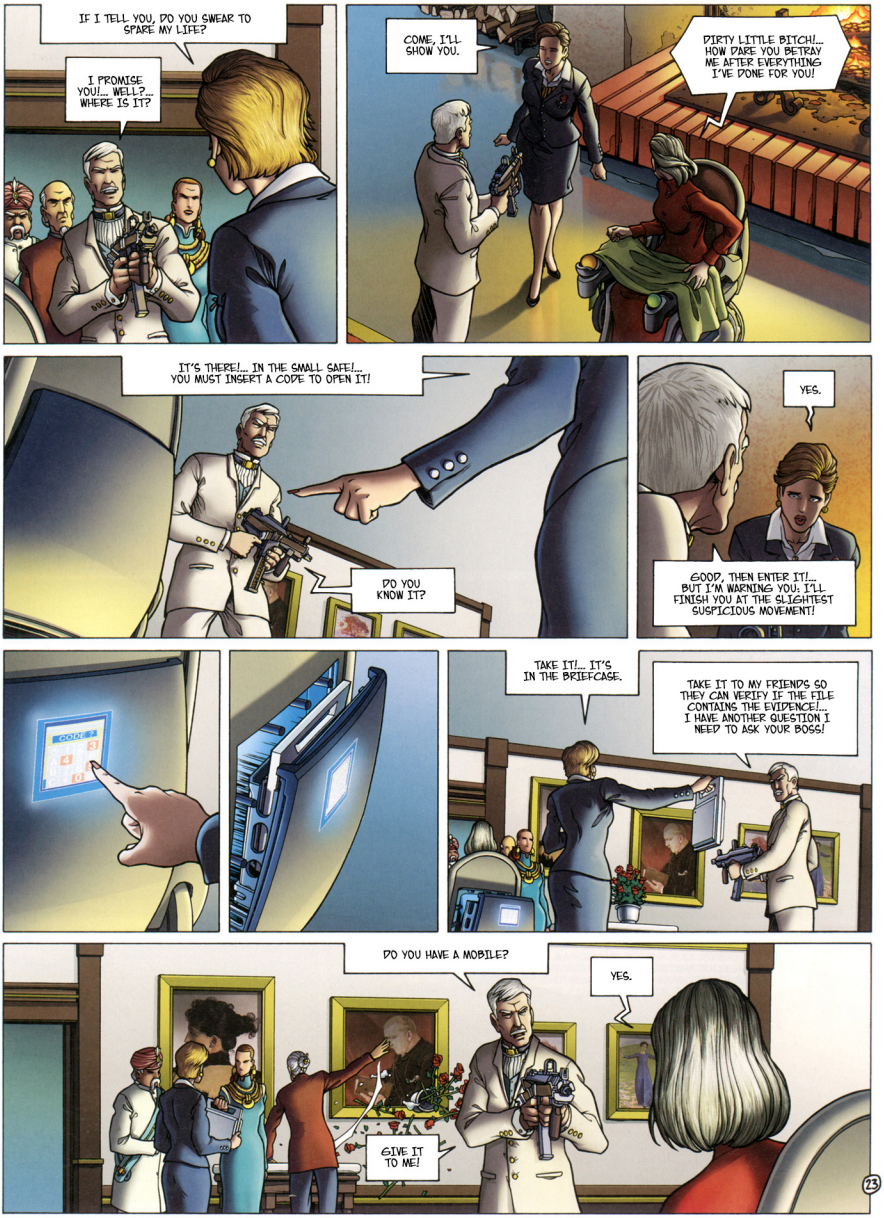

?!
WHAT... WHAT HAPPENED, ACHESON?... I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING!
WE HAD AN ACCIDENT, MADAM. YOU WERE STUNNED BY THE SHOCK AND EJECTED FROM YOUR SEAT. REGRETTABLY, YOU HAVE A FRACTURED SPINE. I CARRIED YOU FROM THE JET AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE AND BROUGHT YOU HERE BECAUSE I FEARED IT WOULD CATCH FIRE.
THEN I RETURNED TO THE PLANE TO LOOK FOR A FOIL BLANKET TO PROTECT YOU FROM THE COLD, AND TOOLS TO MAKE THIS SLED WITH PIECES OF CABIN TORN AWAY IN THE CRASH.
WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT?... ENGINE FAILURE?
I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE THE BLACK BOX WILL REVEAL THAT. I MANAGED TO RECOVER IT. I PUT IT IN A BAG WITH SOME FOOD AND A BOTTLE OF WATER WHICH I FOUND IN THE REFRIGERATOR OF YOUR JET.
MY SECRETARY IS DEAD?
DID YOU SEND OUT A DISTRESS SIGNAL SO THEY COME AND RESCUE US?
YES. THE PILOT TOO.
THE RADIO ON BOARD DOESN'T WORK. IT WAS DESTROYED BY THE SHOCK, LIKE THE ARGOS BEACON.
AS FOR THE MOBILES, THEY ARE UNUSABLE IN THIS LOST PLACE. SO WE'RE UNABLE TO SEND OUT A SIGNAL. WE SHOULD TRY TO GET OUT OF THIS ALONE. IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.

BEFORE BECOMING MY BODYGUARD, ACHESON SERVED IN AN ELITE UNIT OF THE U.S. ARMY FOR SEVERAL YEARS WHERE HE HAD LEARNED TO SURVIVE IN THE MOST EXTREME CONDITIONS...
...HE PULLED THE SLED ACROSS THE MOUNTAIN FOR TWO DAYS WITHOUT SLEEPING, TAKING ONLY SMALL BREAKS TO EAT SOMETHING AND REST A FEW MINUTES...
...IT'S THANKS TO HIM THAT I'M STILL ALIVE TODAY.
THEN WHY DID YOU LEAD EVERYONE TO BELIEVE THAT YOU WERE DEAD?!
BECAUSE I PERMANENTLY LOST THE USE OF MY LEGS IN THAT TERRIBLE ACCIDENT. SO AS NOT TO FACE THE PITY OF OTHERS, OR TO LOAD THE RESPONSIBILITY ON MY SON HARRISON, I DECIDED TO DISAPPEAR.
THE WRECKAGE OF MY PLANE WAS NEVER FOUND. THE SEARCH WAS SUSPENDED. AS FAR AS EVERYONE WAS CONCERNED, I HAD DIED IN THE CRASH. THANKS TO THE MONEY I TOOK THE PRECAUTION OF PLACING IN SECRET ACCOUNTS IN VARIOUS TAX HAVENS OVER THE YEARS, I WAS ABLE TO CHANGE MY IDENTITY AND MY LIFE...
...ONLY MY FAITHFUL ACHESON KNEW MY PHONE NUMBER BECAUSE I HAD CHARGED HIM WITH DISCOVERING THE CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT. ONE DAY, HE CALLED ME...
HALLO?... ACHESON HERE!... I TOOK THE BLACK BOX TO ONE OF MY FRIENDS FOR EXAMINATION. I'VE JUST COME OUT OF HIS OFFICE. THE RECORDING SHOWS THAT YOUR PLANE DID NOT CRASH ACCIDENTALLY, MRS. BANKS, IT WAS SABOTAGED!... YOU WERE THE VICTIM OF AN ATTEMPTED MURDER!
WHAT?!... ARE YOU SURE?
YES, YES, THERE'S NO POSSIBLE DOUBT!... MY FRIEND IS POSITIVE!... I ALSO NOTICED SUSPICIOUS BLACK TRACES IN THE CABIN DEBRIS, SIMILAR TO THOSE LEFT BY CERTAIN EXPLOSIVES.
I WANT TO KNOW WHO CARRIED OUT THIS ATTACK AND WHY!... I COUNT ON YOU TO INVESTIGATE AND SHED LIGHT ON THIS AFFAIR, ACHESON!
MILITARY CHECKPOINT
IT WON'T BE EASY, MADAM, BECAUSE AT THE MOMENT I HAVE NO CLUES!... AN INVESTIGATION COULD BE LONG!... VERY LONG!

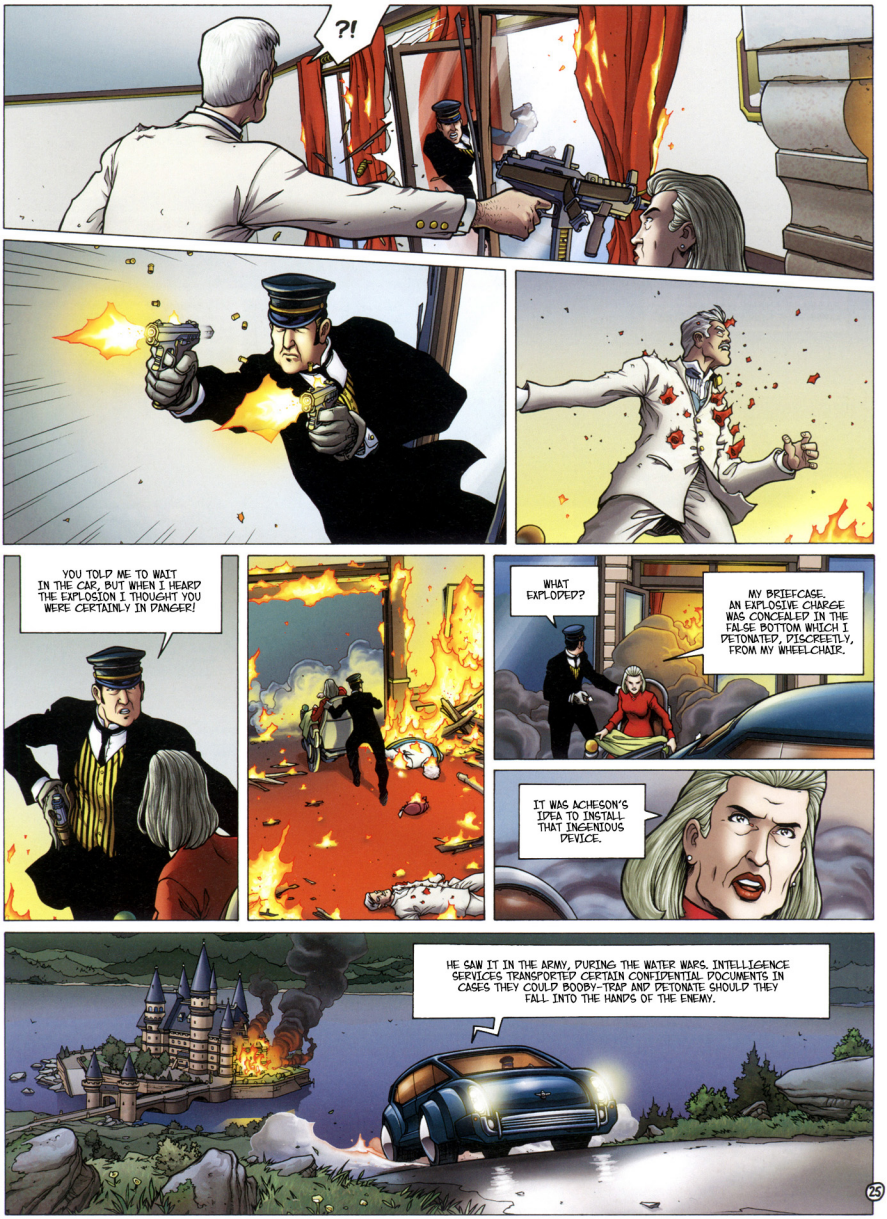

IT WAS INDEED VERY LONG BECAUSE IT TOOK ACHESON FIVE YEARS OF CEASELESS RESEARCH TO FINALLY DISCOVER WHO WAS BEHIND THIS HEINOUS ATTACK. IT WAS YOU!
WRONG!... WE HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH THE SABOTAGE!... YOU ACCUSE US WITHOUT PROOF!
WHY DIDN'T YOU DO THAT?
THINK AGAIN: I HAVE THE EVIDENCE!... IT'S SO OVERWHELMING THAT I COULD HAVE EASILY BROUGHT YOU TO TRIAL!
BECAUSE YOUR RESPECTIVE WEALTH WOULD SECURE THE SERVICES OF THE BEST LAWYERS ON THE PLANET!... THOSE HOTSHOT LITIGATORS WOULD, AS USUAL, CITE SOME PROCEDURAL IRREGULARITY TO FORCE A DISMISSAL AND ALLOW YOU TO WALK FREE FROM COURT!
RATHER THAN DEPEND ON THE JUSTICE SYSTEM, I CHOSE TO SETTLE MY OWN ACCOUNTS. ACHESON KNEW FORMER MILITARY MEN TURNED MERCENARIES. HE CONTACTED THEM...
KID-NAPPING.
WHAT'S THE JOB?
WHO SHOULD WE KIDNAP?
THE FOUR LEADERS OF GOLDEN CITY. YOU'LL HAVE TO PENETRATE THE CITY UNDETECTED BY THE COPS AND IMMEDIATELY PROGRAM A COMPLETE IMMERSION SO THAT THE PEOPLE IN QUESTION CAN'T ESCAPE ABOARD THEIR YACHTS OR PRIVATE JETS.
SO?... WHAT DO YOU THINK?... ARE YOU INTERESTED?
HOW MUCH?
A BILLION DOLLARS IF YOU SUCCEED. THE MONEY WILL BE PAID INTO A BANK ACCOUNT OF YOUR CHOICE.
ALRIGHT, THAT WORKS!
YOU HAVE CARTE BLANCHE TO ORGANIZE THE ABDUCTION. BUT DON'T FORGET: WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU MUST SPARE HARRISON BANKS. UNDERSTOOD?
THE REST YOU KNOW! HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE THING I DON'T KNOW!
WHAT?
THE REASON WHY YOU TRIED TO ASSASSINATE ME!... IT'S WHY I BROUGHT YOU HERE: TO KNOW THE TRUTH!... I'M LISTENING!...

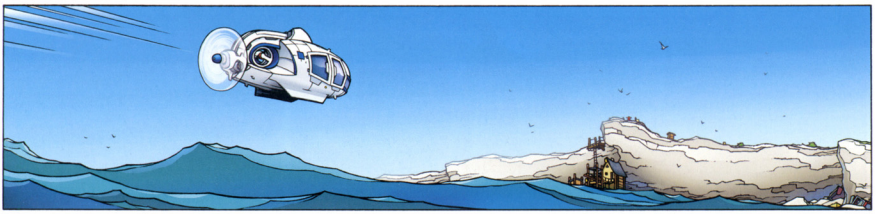
MADAM BANKS ASKED YOU A QUESTION!... ARE YOU DEAF OR WHAT?... WHY DID YOU SABOTAGE HER PLANE?
I'LL GIVE YOU FIVE SECONDS TO RESPOND!... NOT ONE MORE!
ONE, TWO, THREE...
FOU...?!
ARH...
I DON'T KNOW HOW ACHESON SUCCEEDED IN GATHERING EVIDENCE AGAINST US, BUT HE'S RIGHT: WE SABOTAGED YOUR PRIVATE JET!
WHY?

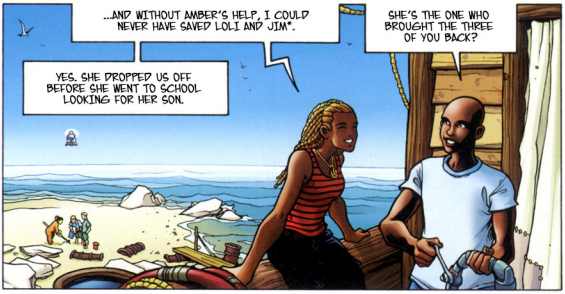
BECAUSE THE YOUNG AMBITIOUS GIRL YOU ONCE WERE HAD BECOME A TYRANNICAL, AUTHORITARIAN AND MERCILESS WOMAN OVER THE YEARS!
YOU MADE GOLDEN CITY AN EMPIRE OVER WHICH YOU REIGNED SELFISHLY, IMPOSING YOUR LAWS ON EVERYONE AND DESPISING THOSE WHO DARED CHALLENGE YOUR DECISIONS!
YOUR INSATIABLE THIRST FOR AUTHORITY AND POWER REPRESENTED A THREAT TO THE FUTURE OF GOLDEN CITY!... THAT'S WHY WE DECIDED TO ELIMINATE YOU FIVE YEARS AGO!
YOU SURVIVED YOUR PLANE CRASH, BUT YOU HAVE NO CHANCE OF GETTING OUT OF THIS ALIVE!... I CAN'T MISS FROM THIS DISTANCE!
NO!... DON'T SHOOT!
WHY?
FIRST I WANT TO RECOVER THE FILE CONTAINING THE EVIDENCE ACHESON ACCUMULATED AGAINST US!... GIVE ME THE MACHINE GUN!
WHERE IS IT?
WHERE IS WHAT?
THE FILE IN QUESTION!
YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THAT I'LL TELL YOU!
ANSWER OR I'LL KILL YOUR SECRETARY!
I... I BEG YOU, MADAM BANKS, DO WHAT HE SAYS!
OUT OF THE QUESTION!... I'VE NEVER GIVEN IN TO BLACKMAIL IN MY LIFE, AND I DON'T PLAN TO START AT MY AGE!
DO... DON'T KILL ME... I KNOW WHERE THE FILE YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR IS HIDDEN!

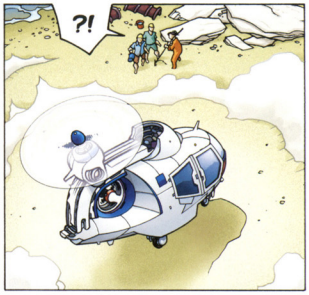

IF I TELL YOU, DO YOU SWEAR TO SPARE MY LIFE?
I PROMISE YOU!... WELL?... WHERE IS IT?
COME, I'LL SHOW YOU.
DIRTY LITTLE BITCH!... HOW DARE YOU BETRAY ME AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE DONE FOR YOU!
IT'S THERE!... IN THE SMALL SAFE!... YOU MUST INSERT A CODE TO OPEN IT!
DO YOU KNOW IT?
YES.
GOOD, THEN ENTER IT!... BUT I'M WARNING YOU: I'LL FINISH YOU AT THE SLIGHTEST SUSPICIOUS MOVEMENT!
CODE ?
TAKE IT!... IT'S IN THE BRIEFCASE.
TAKE IT TO MY FRIENDS SO THEY CAN VERIFY IF THE FILE CONTAINS THE EVIDENCE!... I HAVE ANOTHER QUESTION I NEED TO ASK YOUR BOSS!
DO YOU HAVE A MOBILE?
YES.
GIVE IT TO ME!

WHO ARE YOU GOING TO CALL?
NOBODY!... I JUST WANT TO KNOW ACHESON'S NUMBER!... I ASSUME HE'S IN YOUR CONTACTS BECAUSE YOU SAID YOU PHONE HIM REGULARLY.
AH! HERE IT IS!... WE'LL BE ABLE TO LOCATE HIM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD WITH HIS PHONE NUMBER!... I KNOW A PRIVATE DETECTIVE EXPERT IN THIS SORT OF SEARCH!
I'M GOING TO ASK HIM TO FIND AND ELIMINATE ACHESON WHO'S CERTAINLY PROTECTING A COPY OF THE EVIDENCE HE GATHERED AGAINST US!... HE'S A WITNESS TOO INCONVENIENT TO LEAVE ALIVE!
IT WAS A BOOBY-TRAPPED!... FOR ALL THE TIME I'VE KNOWN YOU, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER!... I DOUBT YOU'VE EVER SHOWED YOUR HAND WITHOUT KEEPING A JOKER IN RESERVE!...
BUT YOU PLAYED YOUR LAST CARD, IRINA BANKS!... THE PARTY IS OVER FOR YOU!


?!
YOU TOLD ME TO WAIT IN THE CAR, BUT WHEN I HEARD THE EXPLOSION I THOUGHT YOU WERE CERTAINLY IN DANGER!
WHAT EXPLODED?
MY BRIEFCASE. AN EXPLOSIVE CHARGE WAS CONCEALED IN THE FALSE BOTTOM WHICH I DETONATED, DISCREETLY, FROM MY WHEEL-CHAIR.
IT WAS ACHESON'S IDEA TO INSTALL THAT INGENIOUS DEVICE.
HE SAW IT IN THE ARMY, DURING THE WATER WARS. INTELLIGENCE SERVICES TRANSPORTED CERTAIN CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS IN CASES THEY COULD BOOBY-TRAP AND DETONATE SHOULD THEY FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.




...AND WITHOUT AMBER'S HELP, I COULD NEVER HAVE SAVED LOLI AND JIM*.
SHE'S THE ONE WHO BROUGHT THE THREE OF YOU BACK?
YES. SHE DROPPED US OFF BEFORE SHE WENT TO SCHOOL LOOKING FOR HER SON.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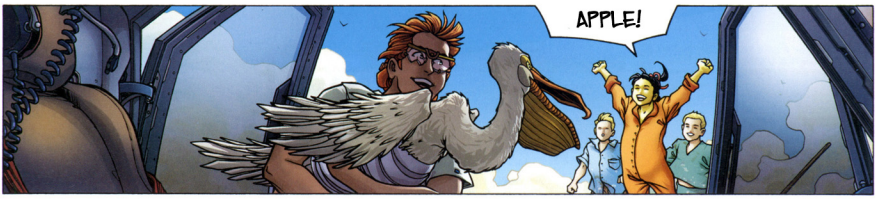
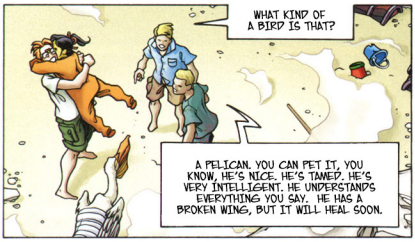
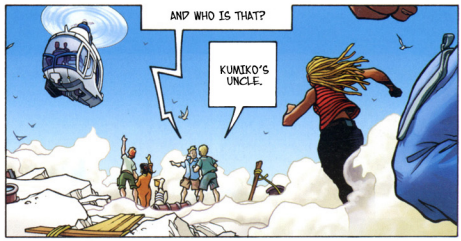
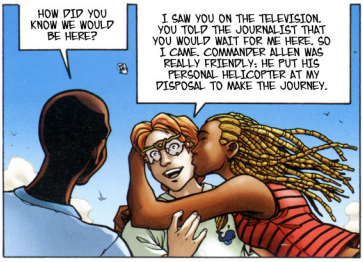
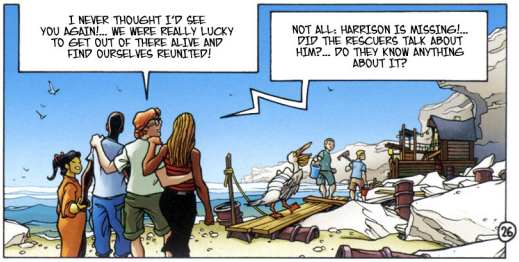

APPLE!


WHAT KIND OF A BIRD IS THAT?
A PELICAN. YOU CAN PET IT, YOU KNOW, HE'S NICE. HE'S TAMED. HE'S VERY INTELLIGENT. HE UNDERSTANDS EVERYTHING YOU SAY. HE HAS A BROKEN WING, BUT IT WILL HEAL SOON.

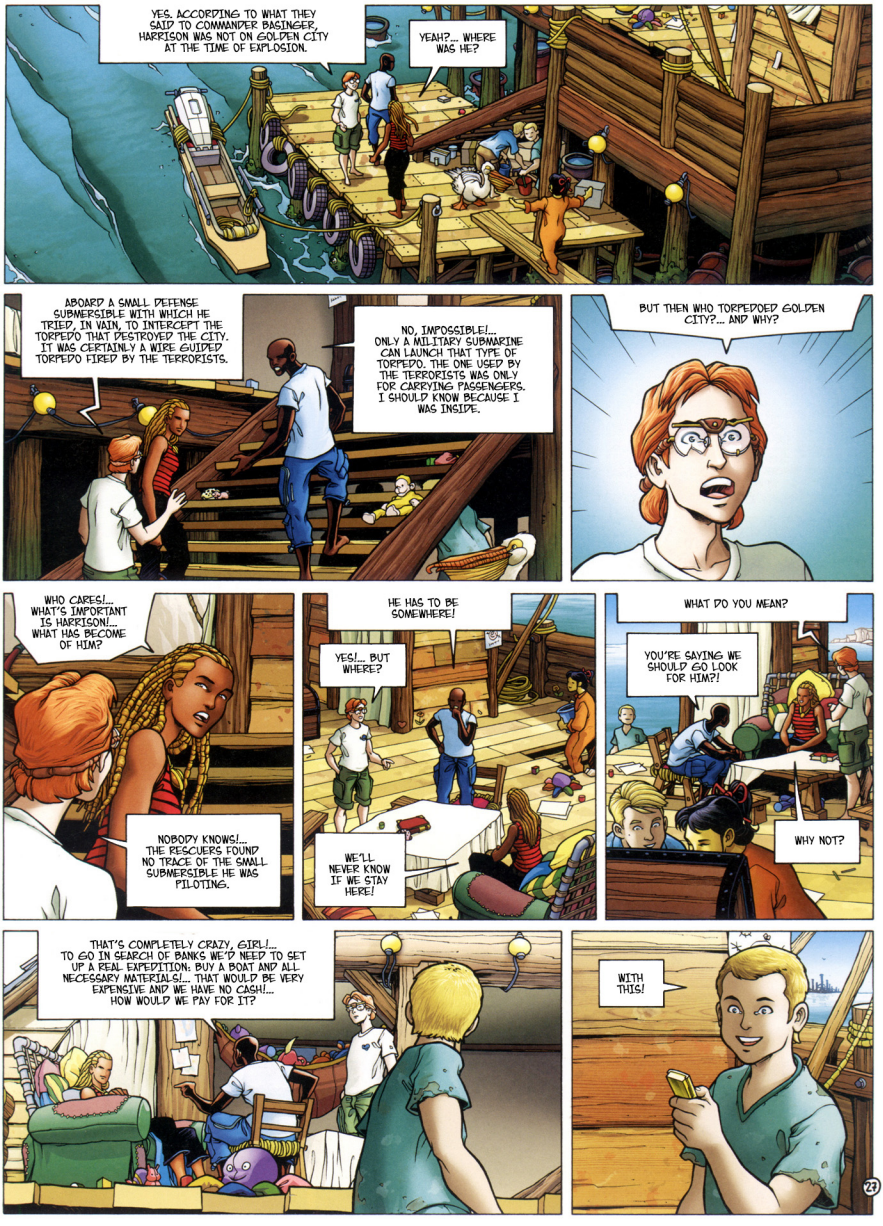

AND WHO IS THAT?
KUMIKO'S UNCLE.

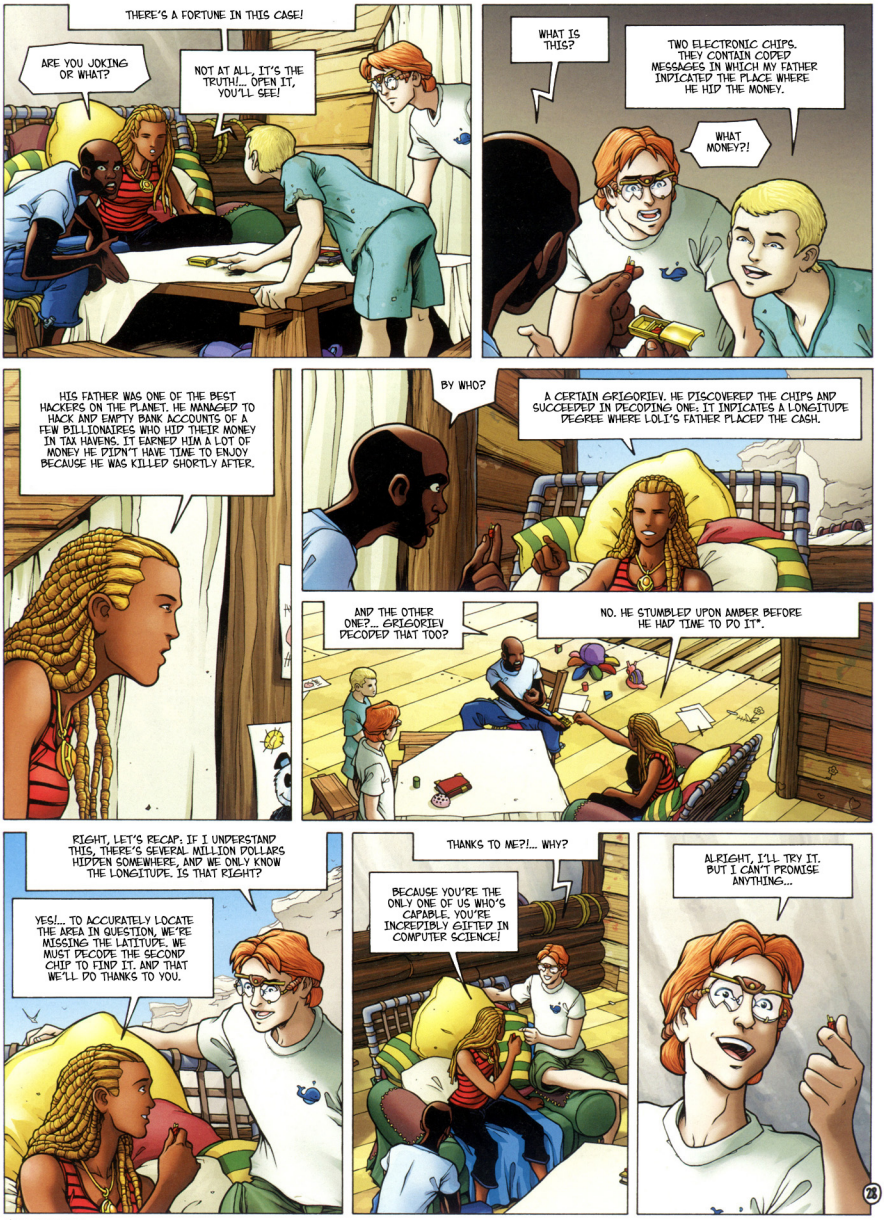

HOW DID YOU KNOW WE WOULD BE HERE?
I SAW YOU ON THE TELEVISION. YOU TOLD THE JOURNALIST THAT YOU WOULD WAIT FOR ME HERE. SO I CAME. COMMANDER ALLEN WAS REALLY FRIENDLY: HE PUT HIS PERSONAL HELICOPTER AT MY DISPOSAL TO MAKE THE JOURNEY.


I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE YOU AGAIN!... WE WERE REALLY LUCKY TO GET OUT OF THERE ALIVE AND FIND OURSELVES REUNITED!
NOT ALL: HARRISON IS MISSING!... DID THE RESCUERS TALK ABOUT HIM?... DO THEY KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT?



*SEE VOLUME 8.


YES. ACCORDING TO WHAT THEY SAID TO COMMANDER BASINGER, HARRISON WAS NOT ON GOLDEN CITY AT THE TIME OF EXPLOSION.
YEAH?... WHERE WAS HE?
ABOARD A SMALL DEFENSE SUBMERSIBLE WITH WHICH HE TRIED, IN VAIN, TO INTERCEPT THE TORPEDO THAT DESTROYED THE CITY. IT WAS CERTAINLY A WIRE GUIDED TORPEDO FIRED BY THE TERRORISTS.
NO, IMPOSSIBLE!... ONLY A MILITARY SUBMARINE CAN LAUNCH THAT TYPE OF TORPEDO. THE ONE USED BY THE TERRORISTS WAS ONLY FOR CARRYING PASSENGERS. I SHOULD KNOW BECAUSE I WAS INSIDE.
BUT THEN WHO TORPEDOED GOLDEN CITY?... AND WHY?
WHO CARES!... WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS HARRISON!... WHAT HAS BECOME OF HIM?
NOBODY KNOWS!... THE RESCUERS FOUND NO TRACE OF THE SMALL SUBMERSIBLE HE WAS PILOTING.
HE HAS TO BE SOMEWHERE!
YES!... BUT WHERE?
WE'LL NEVER KNOW IF WE STAY HERE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU'RE SAYING WE SHOULD GO LOOK FOR HIM?!
WHY NOT?
THAT'S COMPLETELY CRAZY, GIRL!... TO GO IN SEARCH OF BANKS WE'D NEED TO SET UP A REAL EXPEDITION: BUY A BOAT AND ALL NECESSARY MATERIALS!... THAT WOULD BE VERY EXPENSIVE AND WE HAVE NO CASH!... HOW WOULD WE PAY FOR IT?
WITH THIS!


THERE'S A FORTUNE IN THIS CASE!
ARE YOU JOKING OR WHAT?
NOT AT ALL, IT'S THE TRUTH!... OPEN IT, YOU'LL SEE!
WHAT IS THIS?
TWO ELECTRONIC CHIPS. THEY CONTAIN CODED MESSAGES IN WHICH MY FATHER INDICATED THE PLACE WHERE HE HID THE MONEY.
WHAT MONEY?!
HIS FATHER WAS ONE OF THE BEST HACKERS ON THE PLANET. HE MANAGED TO HACK AND EMPTY BANK ACCOUNTS OF A FEW BILLIONAIRES WHO HID THEIR MONEY IN TAX HAVENS. IT EARNED HIM A LOT OF MONEY HE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO ENJOY BECAUSE HE WAS KILLED SHORTLY AFTER.
BY WHO?
A CERTAIN GRIGORIEV. HE DISCOVERED THE CHIPS AND SUCCEEDED IN DECODING ONE: IT INDICATES A LONGITUDE DEGREE WHERE LOLI'S FATHER PLACED THE CASH.
AND THE OTHER ONE?... GRIGORIEV DECODED THAT TOO?
NO. HE STUMBLED UPON AMBER BEFORE HE HAD TIME TO DO IT*.
RIGHT, LET'S RECAP: IF I UNDERSTAND THIS, THERE'S SEVERAL MILLION DOLLARS HIDDEN SOMEWHERE, AND WE ONLY KNOW THE LONGITUDE. IS THAT RIGHT?
YES!... TO ACCURATELY LOCATE THE AREA IN QUESTION, WE'RE MISSING THE LATITUDE. WE MUST DECODE THE SECOND CHIP TO FIND IT. AND THAT WE'LL DO THANKS TO YOU.
THANKS TO ME?!... WHY?
BECAUSE YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE OF US WHO'S CAPABLE: YOU'RE INCREDIBLY GIFTED IN COMPUTER SCIENCE!
ALRIGHT, I'LL TRY IT. BUT I CAN'T PROMISE ANYTHING...

*SEE VOLUME 8.

OVER HERE!... COME SEE!... THERE ARE OTHER SURVIVORS!
WHERE?
IN THE ELEVATOR!
UNPACK THE JETPACK!... FAST!
GIVE ME THE GUN TOO!

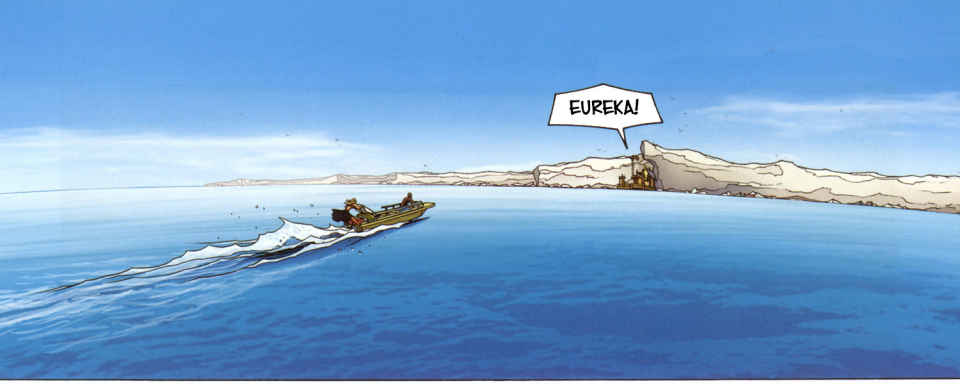
I'LL HAVE TO BREAK THE GLASS TO GET YOU OUT!... SO MOVE YOURSELF BACK TO THE BOTTOM OF THE ELEVATOR AS FAR AS POSSIBLE AND WRAP YOURSELF AND THE BABY IN YOUR COAT SO THAT NEITHER OF YOU ARE WOUNDED BY THE BROKEN GLASS!
ALRIGHT!

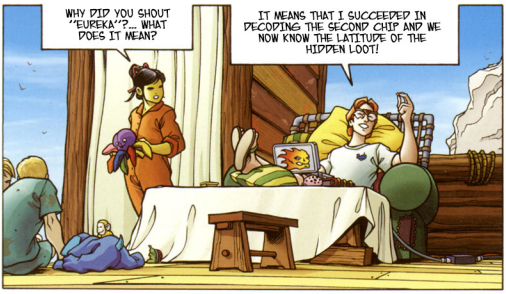
ARE YOU OKAY?... DID YOU GET ANY GLASS SHARDS?
NO. MY BABY NEITHER.
GIVE IT TO ME. I CAN'T TAKE YOU BOTH DOWN TOGETHER. SO I'LL START WITH HIM.
POOR LITTLE ONE MUST BE DYING OF HUNGER!
NO. I WAS COMING HOME FROM RUNNING ERRANDS WHEN THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION AND THE ELEVATOR GOT STUCK. MY BASKET WAS FULL OF GROCERIES WHICH I USED TO FEED US BOTH.
COVER HER WITH A SURVIVAL BLANKET WHILE I GO FETCH HER MOTHER.
OK!

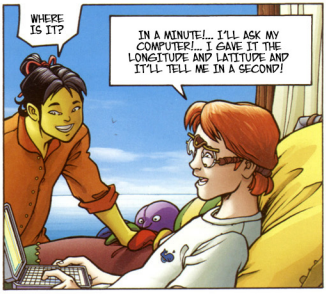
WHERE ARE THE SURVIVAL BLANKETS?
IN MY BAG.
CAN YOU PASS ME ONE, PLEASE?
EMERGENCY BLANKET
HERE!... THIS MODEL WAS MADE ESPECIALLY FOR A BABY.
WATCH OUT!... BEHIND YOU!
?!
RRROOOWW

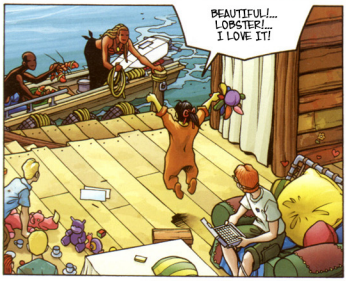
NOOOOO!... NOT ME...
...I'M NOT EDIBLE!

PHEW!... THAT WAS CLOSE!... WHERE DID THAT TIGER COME FROM?
FROM THE ZOO!... HE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SINKING AND ESCAPED.
THERE'S A ZOO IN GOLDEN CITY?!
YES!... IT WAS CREATED BY HARRISON BANKS TO GATHER ENDANGERED SPECIES. THIS SIBERIAN TIGER WAS PART OF IT.
ALL ITS CONGENERS HAVE DISAPPEARED, VICTIMS OF POACHING AND THE DEFORESTATION OF THEIR HUNTING TERRITORIES.
YOU MEAN TO SAY THAT THERE ARE NOW NO MORE SIBERIAN TIGERS ON OUR PLANET?!
NO. NOT ANYMORE...
...THAT WAS THE LAST.

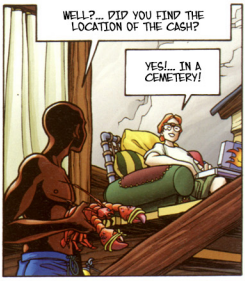

EUREKA!

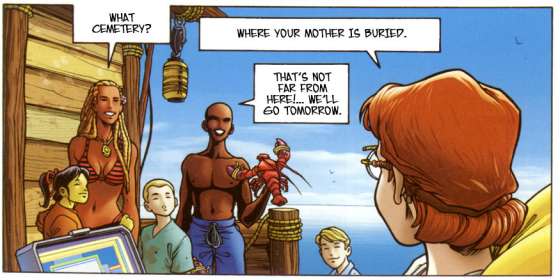

WHY DID YOU SHOUT "EUREKA"?... WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
IT MEANS THAT I SUCCEEDED IN DECODING THE SECOND CHIP AND WE NOW KNOW THE LATITUDE OF THE HIDDEN LOOT!


WHERE IS IT?
IN A MINUTE!... I'LL ASK MY COMPUTER!... I GAVE IT THE LONGITUDE AND LATITUDE AND IT'LL TELL ME IN A SECOND!

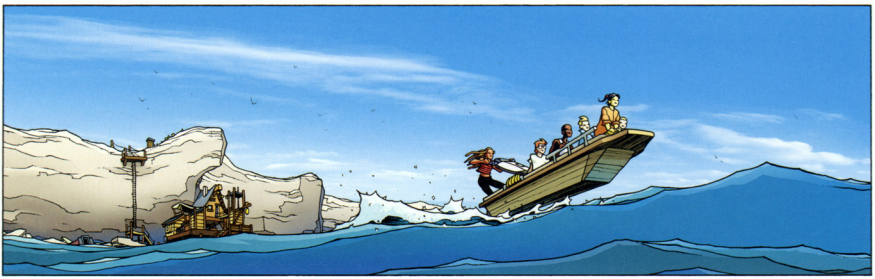

BEAUTIFUL!... LOBSTER!... I LOVE IT!

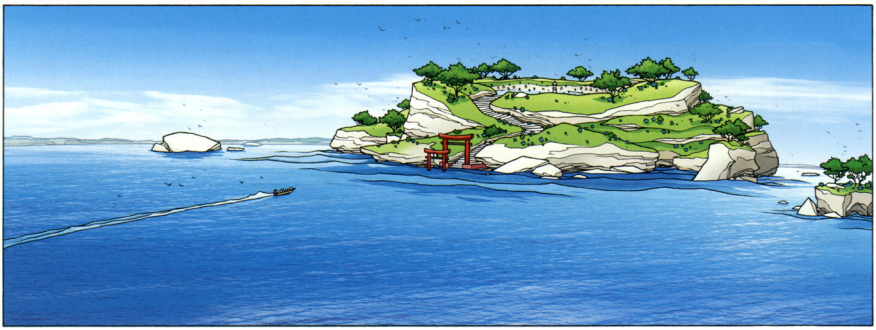
EVER EAT IT?
NO. NEVER.
YOU'LL SEE, IT'S VERY GOOD!

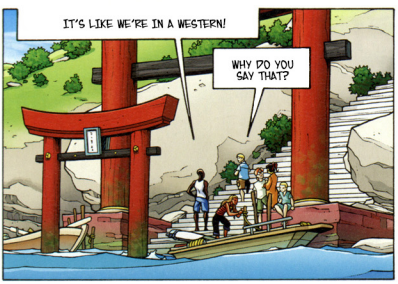

WELL?... DID YOU FIND THE LOCATION OF THE CASH?
YES!... IN A CEMETERY!

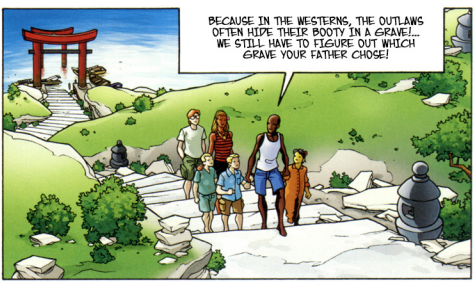

WHAT CEMETERY?
WHERE YOUR MOTHER IS BURIED.
THAT'S NOT FAR FROM HERE!... WE'LL GO TOMORROW.

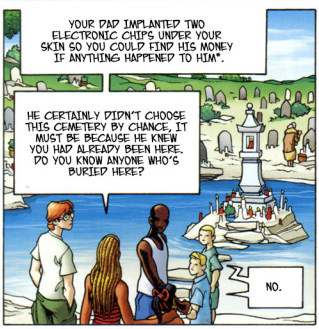
WHY WAIT FOR TOMORROW?... BETTER NOT WASTE TIME, LET'S GO NOW!

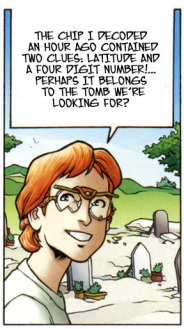


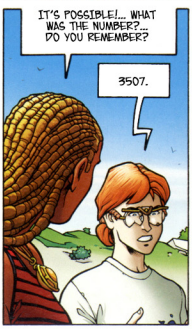


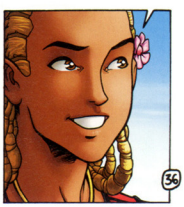

IT'S LIKE WE'RE IN A WESTERN!
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?


BECAUSE IN THE WESTERNS, THE OUTLAWS OFTEN HIDE THEIR BOOTY IN A GRAVE!... WE STILL HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHICH GRAVE YOUR FATHER CHOSE!


YOUR DAD IMPLANTED TWO ELECTRONIC CHIPS UNDER YOUR SKIN SO YOU COULD FIND HIS MONEY IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO HIM*.
HE CERTAINLY DIDN'T CHOOSE THIS CEMETERY BY CHANCE, IT MUST BE BECAUSE HE KNEW YOU HAD ALREADY BEEN HERE. DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO'S BURIED HERE?
NO.

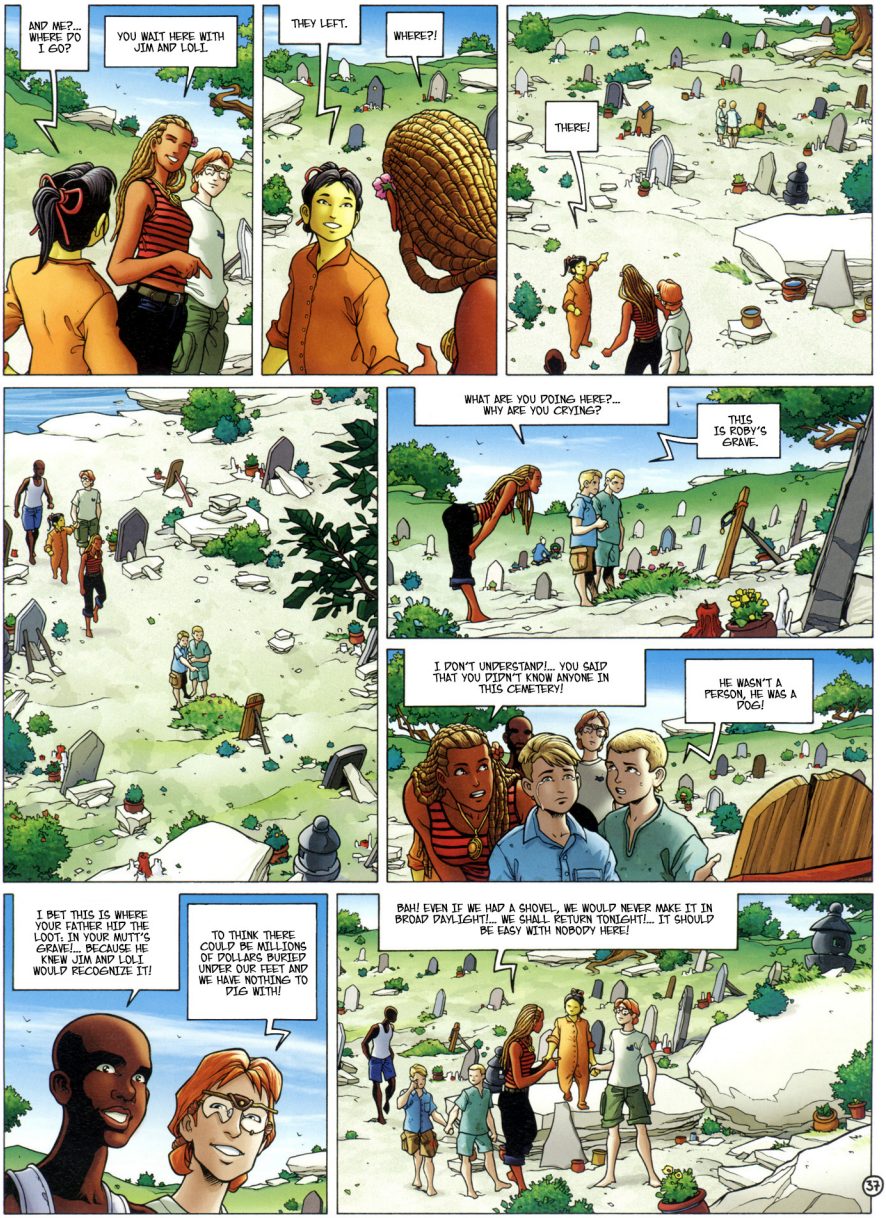

THE CHIP I DECODED AN HOUR AGO CONTAINED TWO CLUES: LATITUDE AND A FOUR DIGIT NUMBER!... PERHAPS IT BELONGS TO THE TOMB WE'RE LOOKING FOR?


IT'S POSSIBLE!... WHAT WAS THE NUMBER?... DO YOU REMEMBER?
3507.

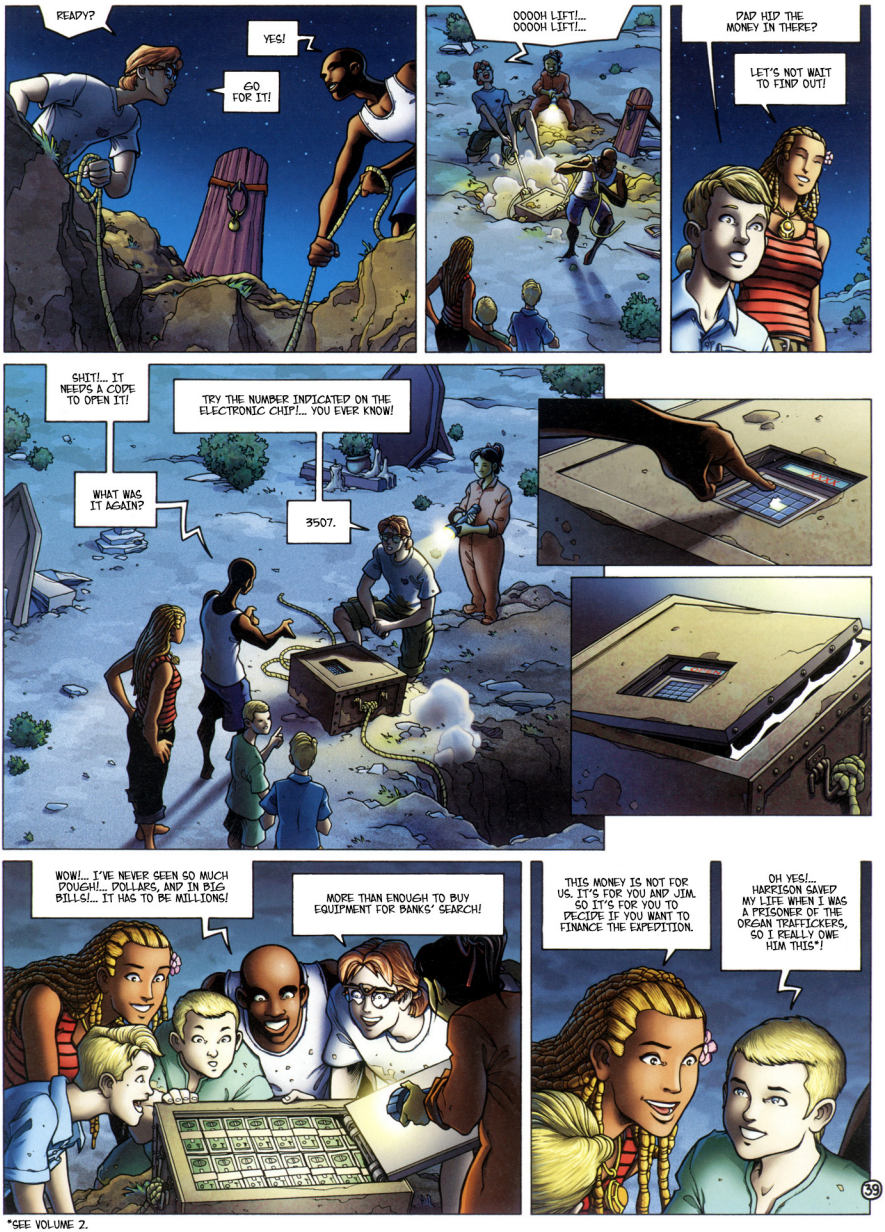

FINE, SO WE'LL SEARCH ALL THE PATHS UNTIL WE FIND GRAVE 3507!... AND TO GO FASTER, WE'LL SPLIT UP!... APPLE, YOU TAKE THE CENTRAL PATH, SOLO WILL TAKE THE LEFT AND I'LL TAKE THE RIGHT!



*SEE VOLUME 8.


AND ME?... WHERE DO I GO?
YOU WAIT HERE WITH JIM AND LOLI.
THEY LEFT.
WHERE?!
THERE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?... WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
THIS IS ROBY'S GRAVE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND!... YOU SAID THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE IN THIS CEMETERY!
HE WASN'T A PERSON, HE WAS A DOG!
I BET THIS IS WHERE YOUR FATHER HID THE LOOT: IN YOUR MUTT'S GRAVE!... BECAUSE HE KNEW JIM AND LOLI WOULD RECOGNIZE IT!
TO THINK THERE COULD BE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS BURIED UNDER OUR FEET AND WE HAVE NOTHING TO DIG WITH!
BAH! EVEN IF WE HAD A SHOVEL, WE WOULD NEVER MAKE IT IN BROAD DAYLIGHT!... WE SHALL RETURN TONIGHT!... IT SHOULD BE EASY WITH NOBODY HERE!

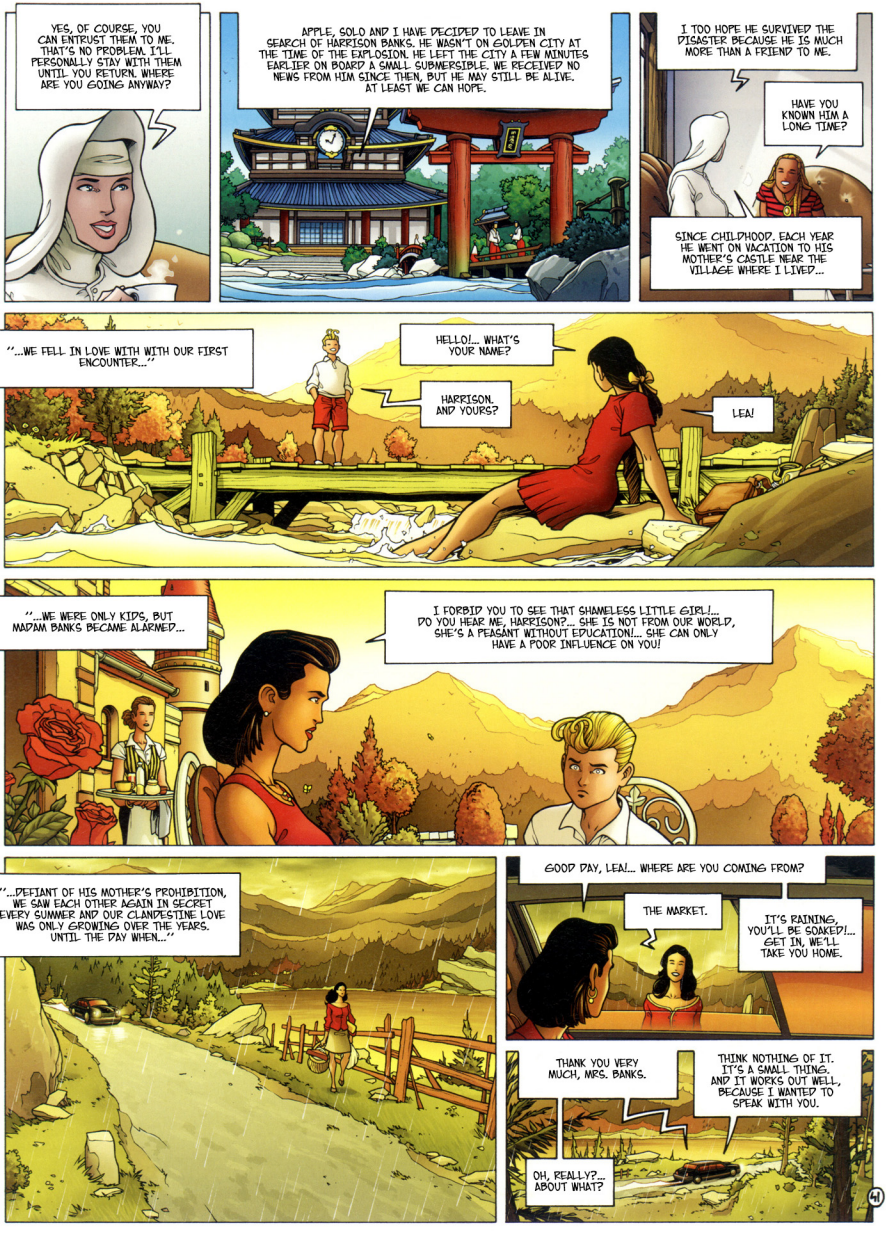
THAT'S IT: I SEE SOMETHING!
WHAT IS IT?... MUTT'S COFFIN?
NO, IT'S NOT WOOD!... IT'S AN IRON THING!... WE'LL NEED ROPES TO BRING IT OUT... DID YOU BRING THE ONES FROM THE BOAT?
YES.
GIVE THEM TO ME!
HEY!... GIRLS!... GIVE ME THE ROPE, WE NEED IT!
WHAT ABOUT US?.. WHAT WILL WE PLAY NOW THAT WE CAN'T JUMP-ROPE?
TAKE THIS AND LIGHT THE GRAVE!... WE'RE BUSY!

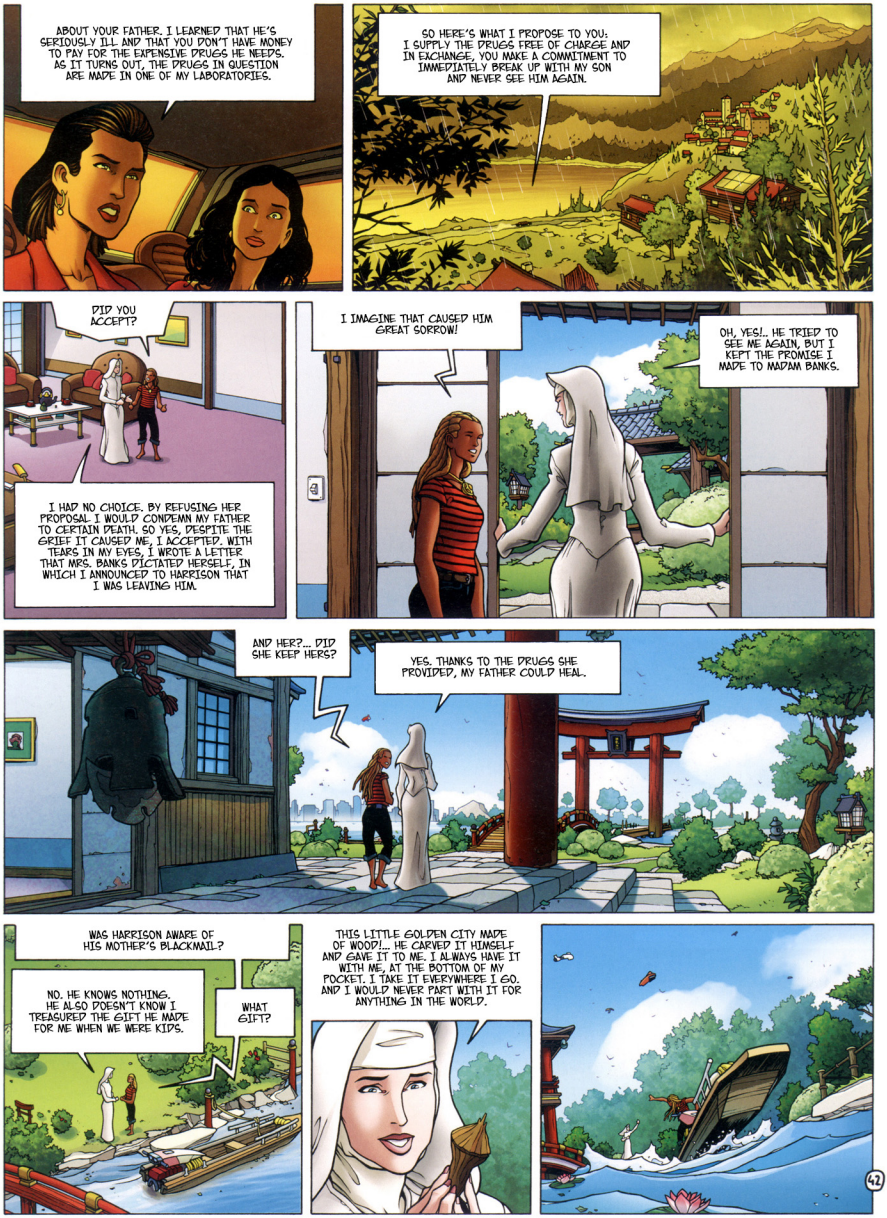

READY?
YES!
GO FOR IT!
OOOOH LIFT!... OOOOH LIFT!...
DAD HID THE MONEY IN THERE?
LET'S NOT WAIT TO FIND OUT!
SHIT!... IT NEEDS A CODE TO OPEN IT!
TRY THE NUMBER INDICATED ON THE ELECTRONIC CHIP!... YOU EVER KNOW!
WHAT WAS IT AGAIN?
3507.
WOW!... I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MUCH DOUGH!... DOLLARS, AND IN BIG BILLS!... IT HAS TO BE MILLIONS!
MORE THAN ENOUGH TO BUY EQUIPMENT FOR BANKS' SEARCH!
THIS MONEY IS NOT FOR US. IT'S FOR YOU AND JIM. SO IT'S FOR YOU TO DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO FINANCE THE EXPEDITION.
OH YES!... HARRISON SAVED MY LIFE WHEN I WAS A PRISONER OF THE ORGAN TRAFFICKERS, SO I REALLY OWE HIM THIS*!

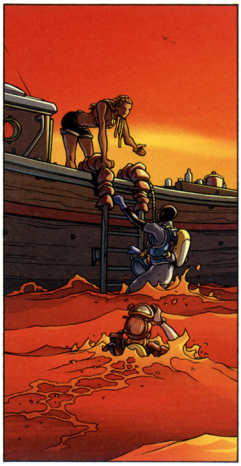


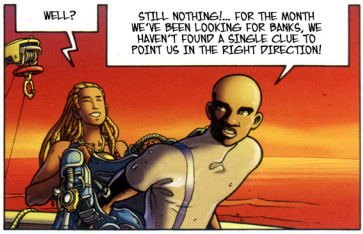
*SEE VOLUME 2.

BETTER NOT STAY HERE!... TAKE THE LOOT TO THE BOAT!... I'LL FILL UP THE GRAVE TO LEAVE NO TRACE OF OUR PASSAGE AND JOIN YOU!
WE'RE GOING HOME?
YES.
SO MUCH THE BETTER BECAUSE JIM AND I ARE TIRED. WE NEED TO SLEEP.
ME TOO.
JIM
WE'LL NEED TO FIND A HIDEOUT FOR THE CASH!... IT WOULD BE TOO STUPID TO GET IT STOLEN!
AND THEM?... WHAT DO WE DO WITH THEM?... WE CAN'T TAKE THEM IN SEARCH OF BANKS: THEY ARE TOO SMALL TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A JOURNEY.
THAT'S RIGHT!... SOMEONE SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THEM IN OUR ABSENCE, BUT WHO?
SISTER LEA. SHE'S THE ONLY PERSON WHO WE CAN FULLY TRUST.
DO YOU THINK SHE'LL ACCEPT?

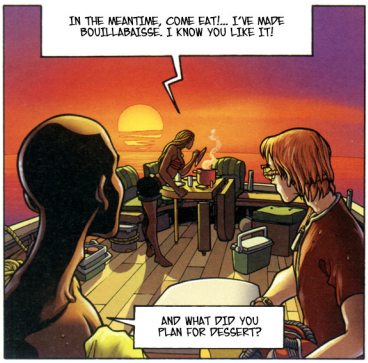

YES, OF COURSE, YOU CAN ENTRUST THEM TO ME. THAT'S NO PROBLEM. I'LL PERSONALLY STAY WITH THEM UNTIL YOU RETURN. WHERE ARE YOU GOING ANYWAY?
APPLE, SOLO AND I HAVE DECIDED TO LEAVE IN SEARCH OF HARRISON BANKS. HE WASN'T ON GOLDEN CITY AT THE TIME OF THE EXPLOSION. HE LEFT THE CITY A FEW MINUTES EARLIER ON BOARD A SMALL SUBMERSIBLE. WE RECEIVED NO NEWS FROM HIM SINCE THEN, BUT HE MAY STILL BE ALIVE. AT LEAST WE CAN HOPE.
I TOO HOPE HE SURVIVED THE DISASTER BECAUSE HE IS MUCH MORE THAN A FRIEND TO ME.
HAVE YOU KNOWN HIM A LONG TIME?
SINCE CHILDHOOD. EACH YEAR HE WENT ON VACATION TO HIS MOTHER'S CASTLE NEAR THE VILLAGE WHERE I LIVED...
''...WE FELL IN LOVE WITH WITH OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER...''
HELLO!... WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
HARRISON. AND YOURS?
LEA!
''...WE WERE ONLY KIDS, BUT MADAM BANKS BECAME ALARMED...
I FORBID YOU TO SEE THAT SHAMELESS LITTLE GIRL!... DO YOU HEAR ME, HARRISON?... SHE IS NOT FROM OUR WORLD, SHE'S A PEASANT WITHOUT EDUCATION!... SHE CAN ONLY HAVE A POOR INFLUENCE ON YOU!
''...DEFIANT OF HIS MOTHER'S PROHIBITION, WE SAW EACH OTHER AGAIN IN SECRET EVERY SUMMER AND OUR CLANDESTINE LOVE WAS ONLY GROWING OVER THE YEARS. UNTIL THE DAY WHEN...''
GOOD DAY, LEA!... WHERE ARE YOU COMING FROM?
THE MARKET.
IT'S RAINING, YOU'LL BE SOAKED!... GET IN, WE'LL TAKE YOU HOME.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MRS. BANKS.
THINK NOTHING OF IT. IT'S A SMALL THING. AND IT WORKS OUT WELL, BECAUSE I WANTED TO SPEAK WITH YOU.
OH, REALLY?.. ABOUT WHAT?

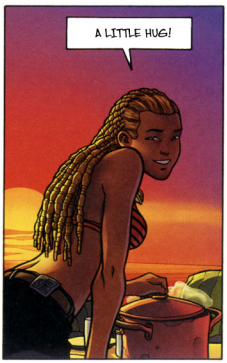

ABOUT YOUR FATHER. I LEARNED THAT HE'S SERIOUSLY ILL AND THAT YOU DON'T HAVE MONEY TO PAY FOR THE EXPENSIVE DRUGS HE NEEDS. AS IT TURNS OUT, THE DRUGS IN QUESTION ARE MADE IN ONE OF MY LABORATORIES.
SO HERE'S WHAT I PROPOSE TO YOU: I SUPPLY THE DRUGS FREE OF CHARGE AND IN EXCHANGE, YOU MAKE A COMMITMENT TO IMMEDIATELY BREAK UP WITH MY SON AND NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN.
DID YOU ACCEPT?
I HAD NO CHOICE. BY REFUSING HER PROPOSAL I WOULD CONDEMN MY FATHER TO CERTAIN DEATH. SO YES, DESPITE THE GRIEF IT CAUSED ME, I ACCEPTED. WITH TEARS IN MY EYES, I WROTE A LETTER THAT MRS. BANKS DICTATED HERSELF, IN WHICH I ANNOUNCED TO HARRISON THAT I WAS LEAVING HIM.
I IMAGINE THAT CAUSED HIM GREAT SORROW!
OH, YES!.. HE TRIED TO SEE ME AGAIN, BUT I KEPT THE PROMISE I MADE TO MADAM BANKS.
AND HER?... DID SHE KEEP HERS?
YES. THANKS TO THE DRUGS SHE PROVIDED, MY FATHER COULD HEAL.
WAS HARRISON AWARE OF HIS MOTHER'S BLACKMAIL?
NO. HE KNOWS NOTHING. HE ALSO DOESN'T KNOW I TREASURED THE GIFT HE MADE FOR ME WHEN WE WERE KIDS.
WHAT GIFT?
THIS LITTLE GOLDEN CITY MADE OF WOOD!... HE CARVED IT HIMSELF AND GAVE IT TO ME. I ALWAYS HAVE IT WITH ME, AT THE BOTTOM OF MY POCKET. I TAKE IT EVERYWHERE I GO. AND I WOULD NEVER PART WITH IT FOR ANYTHING IN THE WORLD.



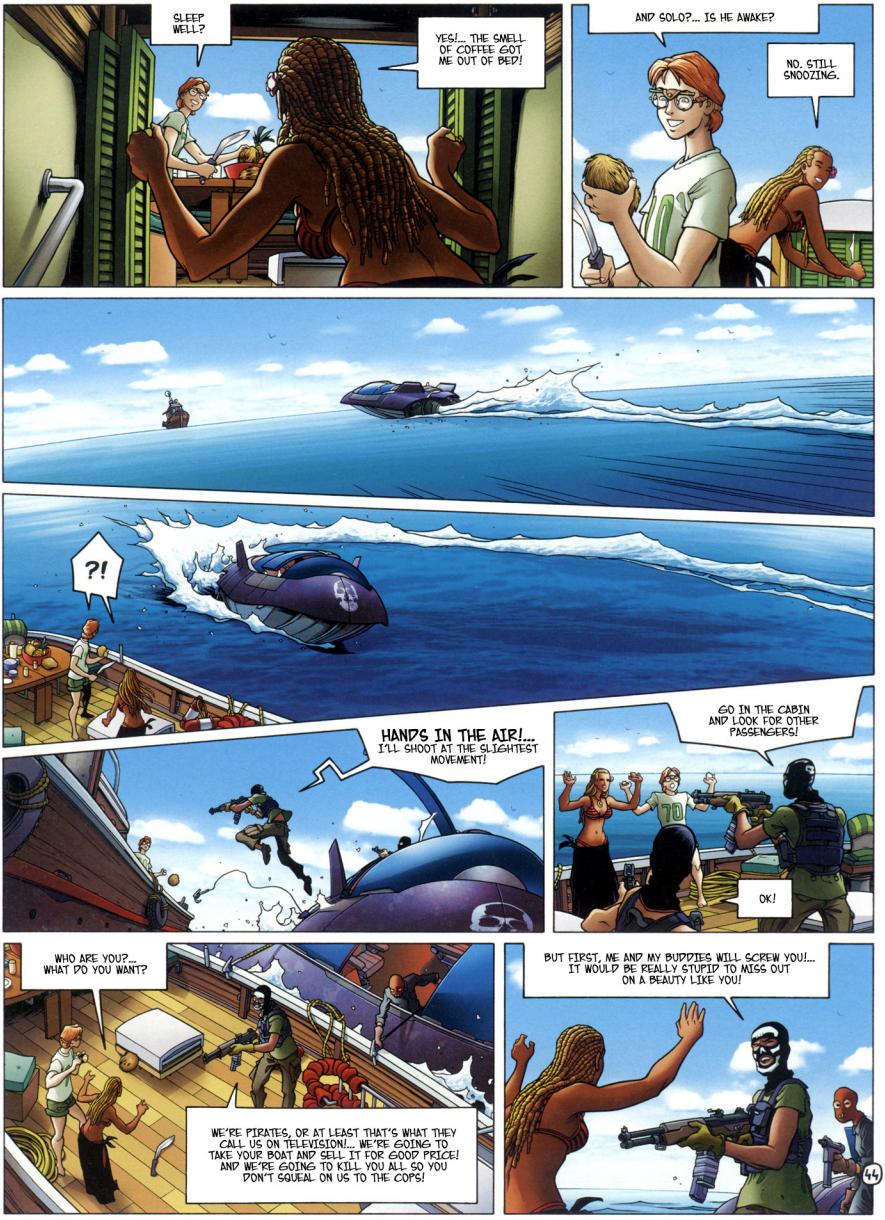

WELL?
STILL NOTHING!... FOR THE MONTH WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR BANKS, WE HAVEN'T FOUND A SINGLE CLUE TO POINT US IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!

WE SHOULD DROP ALL THIS AND RETURN HOME!
NO, DON'T GET DISCOURAGED!... TOMORROW WE'LL GO LOOK IN ANOTHER PLACE!

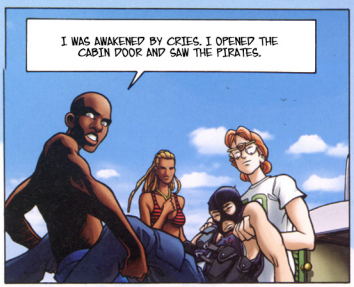

IN THE MEANTIME, COME EAT!... I'VE MADE BOUILLABAISSE. I KNOW YOU LIKE IT!
AND WHAT DID YOU PLAN FOR DESSERT?

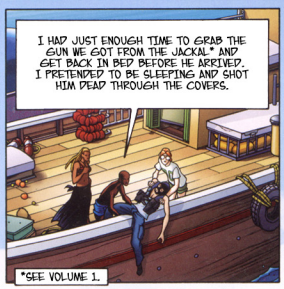

A LITTLE HUG!

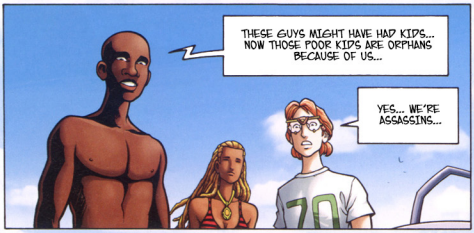
THAT'S A GOOD IDEA!
I WOULD RATHER START WITH DESSERT!

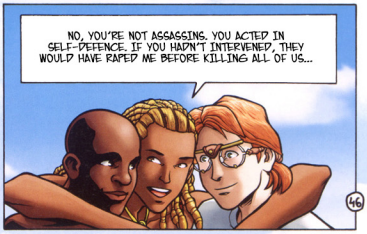

SLEEP WELL?
YES!... THE SMELL OF COFFEE GOT ME OUT OF BED!
AND SOLO?... IS HE AWAKE?
NO. STILL SNOOZING.
?!
HANDS IN THE AIR!... I'LL SHOOT AT THE SLIGHTEST MOVEMENT!
GO IN THE CABIN AND LOOK FOR OTHER PASSENGERS!
OK!
WHO ARE YOU?... WHAT DO YOU WANT?
WE'RE PIRATES, OR AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL US ON TELEVISION!... WE'RE GOING TO TAKE YOUR BOAT AND SELL IT FOR GOOD PRICE! AND WE'RE GOING TO KILL YOU ALL SO YOU DON'T SQUEAL ON US TO THE COPS!
BUT FIRST, ME AND MY BUDDIES WILL SCREW YOU!... IT WOULD BE REALLY STUPID TO MISS OUT ON A BEAUTY LIKE YOU!

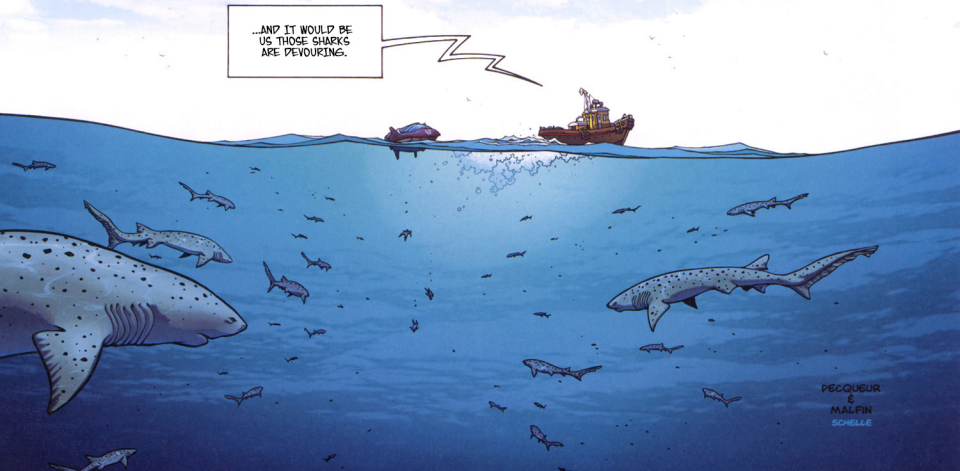
RISE AND SHINE!
GET UP!...OUT OF YOUR BUNK AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT!
DID YOU HEAR THAT?
YEAH!... GO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON WHILE I FINISH WITH THIS LITTLE BITCH!
NOOOO!!... LET ME GO!
AARRRHHH!
?!
BASTARDS, I WILL...


I WAS AWAKENED BY CRIES. I OPENED THE CABIN DOOR AND SAW THE PIRATES.


I HAD JUST ENOUGH TIME TO GRAB THE GUN WE GOT FROM THE JACKAL* AND GET BACK IN BED BEFORE HE ARRIVED. I PRETENDED TO BE SLEEPING AND SHOT HIM DEAD THROUGH THE COVERS.
*SEE VOLUME 1.


THESE GUYS MIGHT HAVE HAD KIDS... NOW THOSE POOR KIDS ARE ORPHANS BECAUSE OF US...
YES... WE'RE ASSASSINS...


NO, YOU'RE NOT ASSASSINS. YOU ACTED IN SELF-DEFENCE. IF YOU HADN'T INTERVENED, THEY WOULD HAVE RAPED ME BEFORE KILLING ALL OF US...
46


...AND IT WOULD BE US THOSE SHARKS ARE DEVOURING.
PECQUEUR & MALFIN
SCHELLE

GENRE
Adventure

•

CHARACTERS

BANKS: Director of most powerful pharmaceutical company on the world and husband to his wife Jessica, lived in Golden City all his life. This City is a prestigious floating town inhabited only by the rich.

MIFA, APPLE, SOLO AND KUMIKO: Orphans who were thrown on the streets. Those four form a real family and their only possession is the hut on the beach where they live.

•

STORY

Who sank Golden City? That's the question arising around the world! Several rescue teams progress with difficulty inside the destroyed city, trying to solve the enigma. During that time, with Amber's help, Mifa succeeds in rescuing Loli and her little brother from the hands of their captors!

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IN THE SAME UNIVERSE

Golden Cup

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